

“IT’S JUST THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME, I FEEL... WICKED”: A RHETORICAL
ANALYSIS OF *WICKED*’S ELPHABA USING KENNETH BURKE’S
GUILT-PURIFICATION-REDEMPTION CYCLE

by

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In Memory Of...

Lauren Tuck

May 14, 1990 – September 2, 2010

“It well may be that we will never meet again in this lifetime,
so let me say before we part, so much of me is made of what
I learned from you. You’ll be with me like a handprint on my heart.
And now whatever way our stories end, I know you have re-written mine
by being my friend.”

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the Broadway production, *Wicked*, and more specifically, the character of Elphaba, or the Wicked Witch of the West. The study utilized Kenneth Burke's theory of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, and considered Elphaba's journey between the three steps of Burke's cycle. In order to understand this journey better, the researcher considered various facets of the show, including the script, lyrics, costuming, including attire and make-up, and interactions with other characters in the production. Elphaba's causes of guilt, including her mother's death, her relationship with Glinda, her cause in working with Animals, and failed magic were discussed. Following this, was a discussion of her various attempts at purification, including both mortification and scapegoating, and finally her ultimate redemption both in her own eyes and those who meant the most to her. By the finale of the *Wicked* production, audiences see Elphaba gain redemption. Though she does not necessarily gain forgiveness or redemption from those around her in Oz, she does finally learn to accept herself, and unhindered by peer pressure, Elphaba is able to live the life for which she has always hoped.

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Chapter One: Introduction

What?! What are you looking at? Oh, do I have something in my teeth?

Okay, let's get this over with. No, I'm not seasick.

Yes, I've always been green. No, I didn't chew grass as a child.

- Elphaba, Act One, Scene Two

Wicked, unlike some other Broadway productions, is not called a classic yet. It has not yet reached the same level of acclaim as *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, or *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. It is comparatively new, and as such, it has not been studied in the same breadth or depth as its counterparts. It is important to understand that *Wicked*'s history spans over one hundred years, numerous platforms, and relies heavily on many differing reincarnations of a novel first released in 1900 by a man named L. Frank Baum.

The show, which first opened in 2003 is a two-act production, and, for true Oz fans, a clear mixture of several different storylines, taking inspiration from Baum's original novel, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, and Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch*.

Due to its fairly "new" status on Broadway, the production of *Wicked* is somewhat limited in the past research conducted on its characters, plot, and script. In many ways, the show can be compared to a well waiting to be tapped, and this particular analysis will only touch on one of the many worthy studies that can be found within *Wicked*. This study will consider the main character, Elphaba, and her rather difficult life in relation to Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle.

Rationale for Study

The qualitative analysis of this particular production, *Wicked*, is necessary for several different reasons. There are four reasons in particular that support the need for studying the production of *Wicked*, and the specific character of Elphaba, or the Wicked Witch of the West. The first reason for the study is the prominence and importance of theater throughout history, and in society today. The second reason for this study is the prevalence of the Wicked Witch of the West's character through numerous outlets, including literature, television, film, and Broadway. The third reason for this study is the lack of previous research conducted, and the hole that exists in analyses conducted on the production of *Wicked*, and the character of Elphaba. The fourth and final reason pertains to a "bigger picture," with arts programs, and theater in general being threatened in today's society.

Theater has been a part of every society, on some scale, for generations. Greek's notion of tragedy and comedy and Shakespeare's numerous, well-known plays have grown into large-scale, sold-out spectacles. Modern day lighting, staging, orchestration, and occasional audience involvement have created a new, larger than life identity for many theater companies.

Furthermore, with the capability to travel not only domestically, but also internationally, many shows, touring companies, and theaters have the opportunity to reach more people than ever before. In the text *The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre*, edited by John Russell Brown, theater's growth and prominence within societies is discussed:

Theatre is thriving today in many ways, with more new play-scripts than ever before and unprecedented forms of production which draw upon advanced technology and the changes of awareness and perception that have followed in its wake. Companies are being organized and reorganized, and reach out to new

audiences. Theatre is now a subject widely studied in schools and universities, and provides a model for thought in philosophy, psychology, sociology, and education. Audiences have access to productions drawn from countries around the world. (Brown 1)

The second reason for studying *Wicked* and Elphaba is the prevalence of “Elphaba-like” individuals. Similar to the prominence and importance of theater throughout history, is the frequent use of the Wicked Witch of the West as a character and inspiration throughout the past century. Though the first generation to fear the Wicked Witch of the West was found in the early 1900s, with L. Frank Baum’s novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, it was not long before more and more Americans, of all ages came to know this witchy character. Through countless platforms, beginning with Baum’s own attempt at an Oz stage production in the early 1900s, and spanning over one hundred years, to the 2013 release of Disney’s *Oz: The Great and Powerful*, the Wicked Witch of the West is now arguably one of America’s best-recognized villains.

Despite her appearance (or being alluded to) in countless examples of film, television, and Broadway, the character of the Wicked Witch of the West is not a character that has been widely analyzed or studied in the past. Even more scarce are studies conducted on the 2003 Broadway production of *Wicked*, or the Wicked Witch inspired character, Elphaba. This lack of previous research is the third reason for this qualitative analysis.

In the past, there have been several studies and analyses pertaining to the production of *Wicked* as a whole. Using various perspectives, including philosophical (Sailors), and psychological (Ross) approaches, the show, in its entirety, has been assessed and explained. Similarly, there have been many studies that address a specific characteristic of the show,

including its uses of humor (Schrader), feminism (Sailors), liberal use of the terms “evil” and “wicked” (Greene) and leadership (Kruse & Prettyman).

The research pertaining to Elphaba, as a single, unique, and specific entity, is minimal. Due to this lack of depth or breadth of research on this particular incarnation of the Wicked Witch of the West, it is worthwhile to consider Elphaba as a complete, and wholly individual character, instead of simply gaining bits and pieces of her persona by considering her use of humor or leadership.

The fourth reason for studying the production of *Wicked* is simply because theater, and the arts in general, are being threatened. The arts are in serious need of support, and must be kept relevant in a culture that says they are not worth the time and effort needed to keep them alive. Numerous studies (Fowler; Brooks; Rabkin & Redmond) have looked at various perspectives of the arts programs, and found data concerning their importance, support and need in school systems. Throughout the years, several researchers (Fowler; Rabkin & Redmond) have also found that arts programs are being cut out of school curricula all around the country. Furthermore, the two studies completed by Fowler, and Rabkin and Redmond suggest that this budgetary decision to lessen, or completely erase, arts programs from schools is a foolish one.

Brown (1995) states that the larger scale arts, Broadway and theater included, are also suffering in an economic recession, as “it is accounted a labour-intensive industry, and therefore expensive and difficult to develop.” (1) It is also suggested, in the same text by Brown, that because theater is now having to compete with a media-saturated, television, film, and music reliant society, it is beginning to falter in its popularity. Whereas theater was once of interest to many, it is now being replaced with other entertainment options. Even once popular Broadway

shows¹ have been turned into blockbuster films, which, further the alienation of true stage-based theatrical support. Though the arts, on many levels, including in educational- and industry-based settings are being threatened, research such as this analysis on specific shows can offer insight and interest to a pastime that seems to be increasingly unpopular.

Rationale for Theory

The theory of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, created by Kenneth Burke, is a logical choice for this qualitative analysis, as it is easily applied directly to the show *Wicked*, and more specifically, the main character of Elphaba. The theory is not often applied in a similar fashion as to this analysis, on narratives and storylines. Furthermore, even less often, the guilt-purification-redemption cycle theory is rarely used in relation to any form of theater or Broadway production. For these two reasons, the guilt-purification-redemption cycle is a relevant and worthwhile theory to use in order to better understand *Wicked*'s main character, Elphaba.

Uses of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle theory in past analyses and studies span a wide variety of artifacts and platforms. Some of these past analyses include applying Burke's theory to various forms of media coverage and agenda setting platforms (Weldon; Scheibel), memorials and the grieving process (Graves & Filling), and oratories, including Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I Have A Dream* speech (Bobbitt). In each of these applications, researchers have applied the theory in order to better understand the recipients of information and their actions that bring them from guilt, through purification, to redemption.

Unlike the studies mentioned above, there have been minimal research analyses conducted on narratives using Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle. A study

¹ Examples of Broadway shows that have been adapted to film include *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hairspray*, *Les Miserables*, *Rent*, *Mama Mia*, *West Side Story*, and others.

conducted by Mikics & Voss considers the guilt-purification-redemption cycle found within William Shakespeare's work, focusing specifically on the in-play character development and the audience reaction to those differing characters. The work of these two individuals exhibits the possibility and success that comes from applying Burke's theory to narratives, and more specifically theater productions. Because it is a pairing so rarely found in previous analyses, applying the guilt-purification-redemption cycle to the narrative of *Wicked* will further expand the breadth of the theory's uses.

Conclusion

When considering the past of both theater and Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle in academia, both are thin in their uses and findings. Due to their absence within research analyses and studies, both the artifact being study, and the theory being utilized are worth consideration. Furthermore, by pairing the two together, a new perspective can be considered on both the production of *Wicked*, and the Burkean theory of guilt, purification, and redemption.

In Chapter Two: Literature Review, the history and context of the show's inception, creation, and reception will be discussed in more detail. This background will allow readers not familiar with *Wicked*, or its history, to better understand the show's popularity and widespread acceptance around the world. Following the background of *Wicked*'s creation will be an overview of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, examples of its application, and previous research conducted on *Wicked*.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Did that really just happen? Have I actually understood?

*This weird quirk I've tried to suppress or hide is a
talent that could help me meet the Wizard?*

-Elphaba, "The Wizard and I"

Introduction

Within this analysis, the Broadway production, *Wicked*, and more specifically the lead character of Elphaba will be considered in relation to the Burkean concept of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle. The theory, which considers a person's tendency toward feeling and attempting to resolve guilt, will offer insight into Elphaba's character, as well as the creation of her costuming, word-choice, and persona as a whole.

First, though, in order to understand how Elphaba's character within *Wicked*, and Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle are able to relate, it is worthwhile to consider the two aspects of this research as individual items. With this in mind, the guilt-purification-redemption cycle's basic principles, previous research on *Wicked*, and theory application will all be discussed further in Chapter Two: Literature Review, but only after a brief history of Oz, and a short explanation of the three incarnations that arguably influenced *Wicked* the most.

Background

The Creator of Oz: L. Frank Baum

Born in Syracuse, New York, L. Frank Baum was a sickly child, struggling with a heart defect that often left him unable to play with other children his age (Rogers 3). Due to his inability to play sports and be active in other social activities, Baum was forced to spend much of his days alone and daydreaming instead (Rogers 3). Baum was known for his active imagination

and eagerness to dream up new and fanciful ideas. Unfortunately, Baum's parents, particularly his father, did not approve of this, and when he was 14, in an attempt to, "make him more manly," Baum's parents enrolled him in Peekskill Military Academy (Rogers 4).

Not surprisingly, Baum did not do well in his new, structured and physically taxing environment, and Baum returned to homeschooling and a life of privacy not soon after. At the age of fifteen, Baum's father, as an apology of sorts, purchased and surprised him with "a small novelty printing press that was immediately put to good use" (Schwartz, 16). Baum began writing short stories and poems, and created a magazine he titled *Rose Lawn Home Journal* (Schwartz 16).

As years passed, Baum remained an introverted, quiet, and sheltered adolescent who eventually grew into a man often described as, "disillusioned ... who ... failed at almost everything he attempted" (Mannix 19). Writing was one passion, though, that never left Baum alone or without purpose. Though failure seemed to follow him wherever he went, L. Frank Baum was a man who still aspired to do great works, and after writing several books that were semi-successful, Baum created the phenomenon that is now called *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* – what he called "by far the best thing [I have] ever written" (Rogers 73). Before *The Wizard's* success, Baum wrote a letter to his sister, in which he explained that the deepest desire he had was to write a book:

When I was young I longed to write a great novel that should win me fame. Now that I am getting old my first book is written to amuse children. For, aside from my evident inability to do anything 'great,' I have learned to regard fame as a will-o-the-wisp, which, when caught, is not worth the possession; but to please a

child is a sweet and lovely thing that warms one's heart and brings its own reward. (Von Hoffman 86)

In adult years, Baum was an avid writer and began branching into short stories and novels. Due to his family's involvement in the oil business, his wife's interest in political topics that often brought many colorful people into his great room, and his becoming more and more invested in religion, Baum had many inspirations for the writings and stories he penned during the next few years.

Interests other than journalism and writing, that greatly influenced Baum included his love of theater and acting. Unfortunately, though, "as a profession, the business of acting and staging plays was not something that would win... much admiration in polite society, as theater was not then considered respectable" (Schwartz 23). However, the Baum family opened an opera house in Richburg, New York, and after the success of Baum's book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, he thought it appropriate to try it out on the stage. Simply stated, "it was a huge success, [playing] for roughly 185,000 people and [grossing] \$160,000 – sensational figures for that time" (Schwartz 109). Though it earned profit and further increased Baum's fame, the stage production ultimately "did more damage to Baum's career and peace of mind than any disaster that befell him," due to the fact that nothing would ever be as successful again during his lifetime (Rogers 110).

After several more attempted plays and theater productions, and innumerable short stories and children's books, Baum's health began to deteriorate quickly starting in 1914. Already struggling with a weak heart, Baum was known for his "cholesterol-laden diet and heavy smoking" that did nothing but further aggravate his symptoms (Rogers 207). Choosing not to take morphine for the pain, in attempt to keep from addiction, Baum found it harder and harder

to write. Unfortunately, “this proficient and well-known author could [no longer] write stories salable to magazines” (Rogers 222). Over the next few years, Baum continued to work, but never recovered, and on May 5, 1919, he lapsed into unconsciousness and died the following day (Rogers 239).

In the closing chapter of *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz*, author Katharine Rogers states, “[d]espite the enormous popularity of the *Oz* books ever since the first one of them appeared in 1900, Baum has only recently been recognized as a major children’s author” (241). Though he was not given the opportunity to see his story grow into what it is today, Baum still received great joy from his writing and successes. Baum’s imagination carried him through health issues, bankruptcy, and family strife but ultimately provided him with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, which was his proudest achievement. Little did he know that from this simple story initially fantasized from his personal struggle and for his children’s entertainment, he would create what is now widely considered “the first American fairy tale” (Scarfone & Stillman 19).

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer’s *The Wizard of Oz*

In 1933, over a decade after Baum’s passing, the rights to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* were sold to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios for a reported \$40,000 (Schwartz 298). Producers agreed to hire Baum’s wife to ensure the creation of a film that would have pleased her husband, had he been alive. Though changes to the characters and storyline were inevitable, producers worked diligently to keep Baum very present within the film by using “stray lines from the book [and] even [adding] references from Baum’s own family life that weren’t in his first *Oz* novel” (306).

Surprisingly well marketed for the time and starring many well-known actors and actresses, including Judy Garland, Margaret Hamilton, Ray Bolger, and Billie Burke, the movie,

released in 1939, was not initially the success that MGM expected. Due to competition with other films, most notably *Gone With the Wind*, released in December 1939, and its infrequent television airings, the film did not bring in the expected revenue upon its initial release.

For the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st, the popularity of the film slowly grew, and fewer people purchased and read the book (and its sequels). In a way, it can be said that technology, as it often does, usurped the original version of Baum's story. Though the film had a somewhat rocky start, it has more than made up for that and "is now one of the most famous and well-loved fantasies in cinematic history..." (Fowkes 55). The text *The Fantasy Film* expresses the idea that *The Wizard of Oz* is, in many ways, the best example of a fantasy film:

In some ways, *The Wizard of Oz* is the quintessential fantasy film, drawing heavily from fairy tales, myths, and children's stories, while itself serving as a reference and influence for countless films to follow. The iconography is instantly recognizable, as is much of the dialogue, music, and lyrics. (Fowkes 55)

Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch*

Despite the fact that both Baum's novel and the MGM film found major success, it took many years for someone to take the story of Dorothy and, rather than focus on her endeavors to get back home, tell the story from the antagonist's point of view. In 1995, author Gregory Maguire took the well-known story of *Oz*, and created an entirely different plotline, based on the inhabitants of Oz before Dorothy's sudden arrival. *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch* was not Maguire's first book to explain an antagonists' side of the story, as he had previously written novels from the perspective of Cinderella's Ugly Stepsister (*Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister* 1999), Snow White's Evil Queen (*Mirror, Mirror* 2003), and a distant relative of Charles Dickens's Ebenezer Scrooge (*Lost* 2001).

In the case of *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch*, Oz was not a happy place, relying on the yellow brick road for direction, kept safe by a Wonderful Wizard, and in fear of a Wicked Witch. Instead, Maguire depicts Oz as a deeply political, broken country under the tyrannical control of a well-known dictator, the Wizard. According to Maguire's tale, the Wicked Witch, or as she is called in his novel, Elphaba, is a helpful citizen who is misunderstood by her neighbors and fellow Ozians. This new perspective brought a new life to Baum's original story. Unlike the gap between the release of Baum's novel and MGM's *Oz* film, after the success of Maguire's book, it did not take long before the Broadway industry recognized the great potential found within *Wicked's* pages.

Broadway's *Wicked*

A common misconception is that *Wicked*, the novel, and *Wicked*, the Broadway musical, feature the same plot. Though the production follows Maguire's plot loosely, and includes his suggested dark political themes, reigning evil presence, and an uneasy society, the play also uses humor and music to keep the show's overall spirit light. Some of the more inappropriate aspects of the novel's plot are excluded to create a story more adapted for viewers of all ages.

In 2000, a group of people met together in hopes of putting together an entirely new Broadway production. Unsure of its name, plot, or specific characters, writer Winnie Holzman and lyricist and composer Stephen Schwartz knew that their idea was a good one, and definitely worth pursuing. As the next few years passed, and details were cemented, Holzman and Schwartz knew that what they put together would be well received, but even they had no idea that *Wicked*, as it was finally named, would become the phenomenon that it has.

Not only was the production written by two wildly popular members in the theatrical industry, as the cast grew, it, too, became known as a star-studded group of individuals. For the

role of Glinda, Kristin Chenoweth, who years before had made popular the phrase “The Cheno High Note,” was well known in film, television, and musical theater. Norbert Leo Butz, previously seen in productions of *Rent* and *Thou Shalt Not*, played the role of “popular boy” Fiyero. Carole Shelley, who played Madame Morrible, and Joel Grey, who played the Wizard, were incredibly well known in the theater and film industries as well, and were huge assets to the cast. Idina Menzel, who played Maureen in both the Broadway and the film adaptations of *Rent*, as well as appeared in *Hair*, and *Aida*, played Elphaba, the main character of both the Broadway production and this analysis.

In 2003, Gregory Maguire’s novel adaptation opened on the Broadway stage and is still growing in popularity. Currently, *Wicked* can be found playing in, among other countries, the United States, Japan, Germany, and England. Relying on the motto, “So much happened before Dorothy dropped in,” *Wicked*’s creators present the Land of Oz as a family friendly locale while offering yet another new spin on a story that has been close to the hearts of many generations. Producers of *Wicked* portray Elphaba as an innocent character who is being wrongly accused and eventually framed for crimes she has never committed, simply because she stays true to her beliefs, while the rest of Oz allows an evil dictator to reign

The production shows the characters as University students, and, audiences see Elphaba’s side of the story, as well as what she claims brought about her title as “wicked.” Finally able to meet the Wicked Witch of the East, and to see a spiteful father, a failed love, and an overbearing roommate, viewers cannot help but sympathize with and better understand the Witch that, prior to the play’s viewing, is so easily despised. Through the use of music and humor, producers return the Land of Oz to a family friendly locale, and portray Elphaba as an innocent character

that is framed for crimes she did not commit. She stays true to her beliefs, while the rest of Oz allows an evil dictator, the Wizard, to reign.

When the production first opened, it was not widely understood (unless a viewer had read Gregory Maguire's novel by a similar name) that the character of Elphaba was actually the Wicked Witch. Given her name because it sounds similar to that of the original *Oz* writer L. Frank Baum's, Elphaba is seen in *Wicked* as a much more humane character, instead of the cackling old woman perpetuated by MGM's 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*.

The Elphaba found on the Broadway stage is quite different from what most viewers are used to seeing. Unlike the previous depictions, evil, green, and full of jealousy, *Wicked* portrays Elphaba very differently. In the beginning of the musical, viewers see Elphaba coming to Shiz University as a caretaker for her younger sister, Nessa. It becomes quite apparent almost immediately that her father does not like Elphaba, and actively works to interact with her as little as possible. Though her life growing up was painful, Elphaba can be seen caring for her sister, trying desperately to fit in, and working diligently in classes. Midway through Act One, the headmistress at Shiz, Madame Morrible, sees Elphaba cast a spell inadvertently, and sings that this magic Elphaba possesses could get her very far in life:

Many years I have waited for a gift like yours to appear. Why, I predict the Wizard could make you his magic grand vizier. My dear, my dear, I'll write at once to the Wizard, tell him of you in advance, with a talent like yours, dear, there is a definish chance, if you work as you should, you'll be making good." (Act One, Scene Two - Dear Old Shiz)

Along with her roommate, Elphaba visits the Emerald City, and sees the Wizard, who turns out to be the reason behind much of the political turmoil currently wreaking havoc on Oz.

Unlike Glinda, who is more concerned with her social status than doing the right thing, Elphaba stands up to the Wizard, and is thus deemed an enemy of Oz and all its citizens. In the text, *Wicked: A Musical Biography*, author Paul Laird says, “The character of Elphaba makes no sense without her cause, and Glinda’s journey from a superficial, ambitious young woman to the humble “Glinda the Good” at the curtain is in reaction to her friend and what Elphaba has taught her about the Wizard” (290).

The second act of the production follows Elphaba, as she tries to save her own name, while remaining true to her personal convictions and beliefs. Unfortunately, in the process, she does more harm than good and, among other things, kills several individuals and casts many magic spells that turn her friends into the Scarecrow and the Tin Man.

By the end of the production, Elphaba is seen in the tower hiding from everything and everyone she has ever known – and this is where the story finds its way back to *The Wizard of Oz*, as Dorothy is seen throwing a bucket of water on the unsuspecting Witch, and she melts. Perhaps the greatest surprise, though, comes after the melting. After the guards, Glinda, and Dorothy have all left; Elphaba climbs from a trap door and exclaims that her plan has worked. She faked her own death in order get away from the negativity that she fought for so long. She, too, finally gets a happy ending.

The show is still not over, though, as the next scene shows Glinda finally standing up to the Wizard and showing him a small green bottle that she found under Elphaba’s dorm room pillow. Until now, the audiences have only been able to wonder what the bottle meant, but the Wizard explains it all when he sings, “I am a sentimental man, who always longed to be... a father.” It is made clear that the Wizard and Elphaba’s mother had an affair that resulted in her birth, and from this small piece of information, audiences are finally able to understand the

emerald skin, the magical power and the internal turmoil faced by Elphaba. It is the Wizard, not Elphaba, who loses everything of which he has ever dreamed.

According to author Paul Laird's *Wicked: A Musical Biography*, Stephen Schwartz, the man responsible for the music and lyrics of Broadway's production of *Wicked* fell in love with Maguire's story almost immediately. He states that Schwartz first heard about Maguire's novel in late 1996, and that Schwartz is able to pick out a good idea for Broadway when he hears one, and claims it as one of his finest gifts:

Schwartz has stated that a bell goes off in his head when he hears a good idea for a musical, and that happened immediately with [*Wicked's*] story. It appealed to him on a fundamental level because [he] loves 'to take familiar characters or stories and look at them from a different point of view' (Laird 30).

After partnering with scriptwriter Winnie Holzman, the production now known as *Wicked* began to take shape in 2000. After several years of rigorous writing, choreographing, and staging, *Wicked* opened in October of 2003, recreating the Oz story once again. It allows audiences to see Glinda the Good Witch, Elphaba the Wicked Witch, and their friends as University freshmen.

In L. Frank Baum's original work, the Land of Oz was a parallel timeline for Dorothy's. In other words, just as Dorothy was living at the turn of the century, Oz was also in the late 19th century or very early 20th century. In the film adaptation, viewers see a similar time frame, and though many of the characters go through a series of changes², the film shows a similar context for the story as a whole.

² Changes made when making the film include making Dorothy a rebellious teenager, rather than a young child; the Wicked Witch and Glinda are middle-aged, rather than in their mid- to late-twenties; the Wicked Witch becomes a major character rather than a minor one; and Glinda is now the one who sends Dorothy to the Wizard.

When determining the context for *Wicked*, Schwartz and Holzman faced a serious struggle, as the production shows Oz both post- and pre-Dorothy, creating a need for two very different but equally important timelines. Whereas the opening number of the *Wicked* production demonstrates a retrospective celebration of the Wicked Witch's death and of Dorothy's heroism in saving Oz, the second number quickly shifts to a new format based in the past, with Glinda's telling her peers about Elphaba's friendship and trials while at Shiz University.

If the production were consistent with Baum and MGM's timeline, this would find Oz in the 1880s, at the latest. This is not altogether consistent with *Oz*, though, as all the buildings are equipped with electricity, car-like vehicles are used in the Emerald City, and even the idea of women being at University, would not necessarily have been commonplace in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s. The context within the play could have proven to be quite a challenge for Schwartz and Holzman, but rather than worrying too much about those complications, they chose to take liberties when writing their production in relation to the Baum and Maguire novels.

According to *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, edited by William Everett and Paul Laird, the context was not as important to Schwartz and Holzman as the need to "account for all [the] 'iconic' images famous from earlier versions of *The Wizard of Oz*: Dorothy's three friends; the Wicked Witch's hat, cape, and broom, winged monkeys, and magic shoes" (341). Winnie Holzman, who wrote the script for *Wicked*, felt that she had every right to augment the *Oz* story, and as a result, she took many freedoms when writing:

I didn't worry about the story told in [Baum's] book that much. We had the rights to the book and the book [became] a resource. You can take whatever you need out of it. It wasn't pushing you around – you're in charge of it... We were going to recreate our own story. (Everett & Laird 341)

Stephen Schwartz, the composer and lyricist for *Wicked*, felt much the same toward Baum and Maguire's storylines, and also took it upon himself to ignore the confines of the two novels:

It is a brilliant idea for a book and a brilliant idea for a musical, but we basically just took the concept and certain situations, certain relationships, certain characters, and then went off on our own. (Everett & Laird 341)

Luckily for audience members, despite the fact that timelines are not consistent; characters are changed; created and ignored, the good become the bad, and the bad become the good, Schwartz and Holzman's production provides a lighthearted, enjoyable story and the 'wrongs' and inconsistencies become secondary to the adventure that audiences experience each time the curtain ascends.

In the book *Wicked: A Musical Biography*, written by Paul Laird, the author states that, "the public ... embraced the show with open arms, but the critics and theatrical establishment have kept the show at arm's length" (274). Citing examples of reviews from not only the New York opening, but also Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Tokyo, Germany, and London, Laird explains, in full, the reception given to *Wicked* after its first night. Citing numerous different papers and critics, Laird shares that shortly after opening, *Wicked* was described as "generically impassioned," "[not speaking] hopefully for the future of the Broadway musical," "a kid's show with aspirations," "oppressive... and banal," "mediocre," and "lumbering" (253-254).

In spite of the fact that many reviewers were hesitant or unwilling to write positive reviews, many others showered *Wicked* with praise. David Hurst, writing for *Next Magazine*, called the show, "a magical new musical for which the adjective 'fabulous' seems to have been invented" (255). John Lahr, for the *New Yorker*, "liked the sets, costumes, Holzman's book, and

the two witches...” (255). Other positive reviews included, “an irresistible extravaganza of music, magic, artistry and enchantment,” “[brilliantly] scripted,” and “a musical genius” (257).

Though the critic’s reviews were a solid mixture of both positive and negative, the audience did not seem to mind. In Laird’s words, “most critics could not have known how well the show would appeal to young women or how devoted many fans would be to the score” (251). Laird also offers several other reasons for the production’s popularity:

Perhaps the most important is the connection with *The Wizard of Oz*, possibly the most famous American fantasy ever written. Even without the iconic film, L. Frank Baum’s novels about Oz have resonated with American children for over a century... The MGM musical starring Judy Garland then gave Oz a strong presence on the silver screen, and the Arlen/Harburg score gave the story an unforgettable soundtrack. Gregory Maguire tapped into a strong current in American popular culture when he wrote *Wicked*, providing the show’s creators with a fine premise. [Elphaba and Glinda’s] friendship reaches across the generations in appeal, and their competition for the same young man is archetypal... For these and certainly other reasons, *Wicked* has found its audience... (Laird 258)

In the article “*Wicked* Divas, Musical Theater, and Internet Girl Fans,” author Stacy Wolf states that despite a fairly rough start, the musical has now earned itself a very supportive following:

In spite of receiving decidedly mixed reviews when it opened in October 2003, *Wicked* was nominated for eleven Drama Desk Awards and ten Tony Awards, and it won three Tonys, including best actress for [Idina] Menzel. Soon after its

premiere, the musical caught on and gained momentum, primarily fueled by word of mouth. It recouped its record-breaking investment of \$14 million in a mere fourteen months, the shortest time of any musical to date. (Wolf 42-43)

Further proof of *Wicked*'s success can be found in the fact that the cast album won a Grammy and hit platinum by selling more than a million copies. Furthermore, in 2006, the show was still filling 100 percent of the seats at New York City's Gershwin Theatre on Broadway, "simultaneously [playing] to sold-out houses in three other open-ended productions in Chicago, Los Angeles, and London," and maintaining a national touring company, as well (43).

Throughout *Wicked*'s stage production, viewers see different experiences and struggles from Elphaba's pre-Dorothy life, including strained relationships with the Wicked Witch of the East (her sister), a spiteful father, a failed love interest, and an overbearing roommate. To further her suffering, Elphaba, after standing up for what she believes to be right, is plagued by her headmistress and the government. They claim she is a traitor and must be stopped. Even when accepting blame for all of their sins, concerns, and shortcomings, Elphaba's character desperately seeks love, attention and acceptance, but it is not until the end of the play, with her last, very final action, that Elphaba receives that which she has sought for so long.

Elphaba's uphill battle is the inspiration for this analysis, and through the use of Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle, the study will track Elphaba's tumultuous life in relation to Burke's three-point cycle. Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle gets its name from its three major steps: guilt, purification (which Burke states can be achieved one of two ways), and redemption.

By utilizing Burke's cycle, this analysis will highlight the three major points- own guilt, purification, and redemption- within Elphaba's life, as well as speculate as to why exactly she

acts, reacts, and feels the way she does in relation to the multitude of upsetting events in her life. In the remainder of Chapter Two: Literature Review, there will be a discussion of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, examples of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle's possible application, discussion of theater, and several previous analyses of Broadway's production of *Wicked*'s plot and characters.

Review of Kenneth Burke's Guilt-Purification-Redemption Cycle

In his article "Dramatism," Kenneth Burke describes the relationship between what he calls "order, or control...[and] variants of faith and reason," and the problems that arise when "temptations [exist] to the extent that the prescribed order does not wholly gratify our impulses" (168). To put it more plainly, Burke believes that in ordered or structured societies, guilt and the need for redemption are ever present and a constant irritant. Burke states plainly, "...if order, then guilt: if guilt, then need for redemption..." (168).

Burke states that an individual's will and desire to do the right thing will always be at odds with his or her desire for perfection (168). Further, Burke suggests that societies generally believe the best in themselves, and that most believe that they would be willing to sacrifice for the betterment of the majority (mortification, as Burke calls it). In truth, the more likely path by many is to run from guilt or blame their pain on others.

In her text *Romancing the Difference*, author Camille K. Lewis discusses Kenneth Burke's religious convictions and how they shape his guilt-purification-redemption cycle. In the article, Lewis states that Burke believes the guilt-purification-redemption cycle is an ongoing phenomenon that never reaches an end because "this tragic cycle [is] inherent in all human interactions" (2). Because the need for redemption is constantly on the forefront of the human

psyche, some researchers suggest that redemption is the sole cause of all human's actions, beliefs, religions, and other lifestyle choices (Lewis; Kuypers).

According to David Bobbitt's text, *The Rhetoric of Redemption: Kenneth Burke's Drama and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s I Have a Dream Speech*, humans strive for, but rarely achieve, perfection. Due to this frequent inability to reach the standard, Burke suggested that "since humans will inevitably fall short of their notions of perfection, guilt ensues. The fact that humans feel guilt initiates the guilt-purification-redemption cycle" (34). Because of this constant pressure to reach perfection, failure in the attempt, and the eventual feelings of guilt that follow, Burke proposes that all human lives follow a similar pattern of emotion:

Guilt creates a need for redemption, and purification is any means through which redemption is achieved. Since guilt is inherent in human nature, redemption is never permanent. There is a never-ending need in humans for symbolic purification and the ritual of rebirth is an ever-repeating cycle (Bobbitt 34).

Burke, according to Bobbitt's text, never gave clear, concrete definitions for his terms guilt, purification, or redemption. Instead, Bobbitt thinks that "we can get a good sense of what he [Burke] means... from the way he uses the [terms]" (34). Without specific Burkean definitions, Bobbitt offers his own loose definitions of the three terms. Bobbitt defines guilt as "a sense of responsibility or shame for having done wrong," Purification as "any means through which redemption is achieved," and redemption as that which happens after the "purification or cleansing of... sin and its accompanying guilt" (33-34).

Though Bobbitt suggests that there are minimal definitions offered for the three major steps within Burke's theory, in the text *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke offers a clear

definition of his ideas surrounding a scapegoat³. According to the text, “[the scapegoat] is profoundly consubstantial with those who, looking upon it as a chosen vessel, would ritualistically cleanse themselves by loading the burden of their own iniquities upon it” (406). Burke suggests in his text *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, that scapegoats are not always successful:

[W]here we cannot find easy outgoing relief or cannot project our guilt upon another, we circle back on ourselves. The goads of hierarchy – the embarrassment, shame and guilt we are made to feel in learning to play our roles in society- are turned inward. Since we cannot punish others, we punish ourselves. (*Purpose* xli)

Further, Burke suggests that scapegoats imply a deep desire for separation from personal guilt, as it is common for the chosen scapegoat to be alienated, ignored, or mocked. While Burke states that “one must remember that a scapegoat cannot be ‘curative,’ those individuals who choose to use a scapegoat are searching for a “rebirth of the self” that rarely, if ever comes (406).

In the text *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*, the ideas of mortification and scapegoating are discussed further:

... [I]f men can rid themselves of guilt only by making victims of themselves, as in mortification, or by making victims of others, as in sacrifice and all its variants, then we must study victimage in its purest form, namely, that of religious sacrifice, if we are to study it at all. (*Purpose* xxxix)

A deeply religious man, Kenneth Burke frequently relates his theories to faith. Burke suggests that Christians throughout history have willingly used salvation and Christ’s sacrifice as

³ According to Burke, scapegoating is one of two differing ways to gain Purification. The other is through mortification

a way to escape from “being symbolically laden with the burden of individual and collective guilt” (31).

In the text *A Rhetoric of Motives*, by Kenneth Burke, Jesus Christ is justifiably referred to as “the Divine Scapegoat” (31). In another text, Burke suggests that the only way to understand and appreciate purification completely, is to understand the Bible and Christ, as they “[teach] ... that victimage as redemption by vicarious atonement is intrinsic to the idea of guilt” (*Permanence*; xxxix).

In the text *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective*, authors Bernard Brock and Robert Lee Scott discuss a different facet of Burke’s theory: the hierarchy. According to Brock and Scott, the hierarchy that humans live with daily “[represents] differences in authority between superiors and inferiors [and] always creates mystery” (185). Hierarchies are found within businesses, families, friendships, religious institutions, and many other groupings, and when they shift or change, people can feel that “the traditional hierarchy” is lost. This loss, no matter how subtle or seemingly insignificant, can create a sense of guilt. Conflicting hierarchies can also cause guilty feelings, as can a change in their own location within a hierarchy (185).

Application of Theory

Kenneth Burke’s guilt-purification-redemption cycle is a theory that has been used in the past in various analyses. Though this study on *Wicked* is applying the cycle to a narrative, previous uses have included media coverage of particular topics, audience understanding of theatrical characters, the grieving process at memorials, oratories, and the implications of rumors.

In the article, “The Rhetorical Construction of the Predatorial Virus: A Burkean Analysis of Nonfiction Accounts of the Ebola Virus,” author Rebecca A. Weldon considers the “attention and fear aroused by recent media attention” of the Ebola virus, and the prevalence of “guilt and blame, as humans seek perfection and consubstantiation” (6;12).

Weldon states that despite the scientific proof that such diseases as HIV, tuberculosis, and typhoid fever are far more dangerous, virulent, and painful than the Ebola virus, the media, at the time of the article being published, was bringing more attention to Ebola than the others. In 1997, Beth Griffen, a woman working at the Yerkes Research Center at Emory University, contracted Herpes when a monkey threw his feces at her (7). An ABC news program, *20/20* later discussed the event more, depicting Ebola as predatory, dangerous, and something to be concerned about. After that airing, and with the help of several other items⁴, Ebola appears more dangerous than it is, Weldon suggests, that from that point forward, “[the] socially constructed image of the predatorial virus emerges as fact,” in spite of the fact that in truth, the virus “actually comprises ... a small threat to humanity” (7).

Weldon considers the Ebola virus and its portrayal in society in relation to human guilt and purification, and more specifically discusses the Burkean pentad, depicting the Ebola virus itself as the agent. In her study, Weldon describes guilt as “an all-inclusive term for any feelings of tension, anxiety, embarrassment, and overall separation from others” that causes us to “seek release from this guilt to the extent that we will name scapegoats and claim victimage to establish our innocence and perfection” (12).

⁴ Weldon states *The Hot Zone*, written by Richard Preston, *The Coming Plague*, written by Laurie Garrett, and *Virus X: Tracking the New Killer Plagues*, written by Frank Ryan also helped raise awareness of the Ebola virus

Considering the Ebola virus and human interaction with the virus itself, and numerous outbreaks, Weldon suggests that in describing Ebola as a predatory and dangerous virus, the media and societies as a whole are able to “deflect blame” from human mistakes, ignorance, poor hygiene, and irresponsibility – many of the causes of human’s contraction of Ebola.

Essentially, Weldon is suggesting that “perpetuating the notion that the virus spreads insidiously and purposefully, without identifying the human factors, displaces responsibility” (20). By perpetuating that idea, humans attempt to convince one another that the guilt and blame that should be on one another’s shoulders, is not something that could have been avoided. Purification and redemption, in a sense, come from convincing the world that the virus, not humankind, is to blame (20).

In two differing reviews of the same text, *Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*, authors David Mikics and Tony Voss summarize Burke’s work and offer their opinions of Burke’s theories and possible application to various Shakespearean narratives.

In the first review, titled *Kenneth Burke, Kenneth Burke on Shakespeare*, written by David Mikics, the author suggests that “tragic plot functions by way of the audience's judgments about right and wrong action” (245). Mikics also suggests that audiences must understand and identify with a character before they will recognize him or her as a “sacrificial victim”:

For the identification to work, the victim (the tragic hero) needs to be a fascinating character who recognizes and incorporates different aspects of the audience. In order to explain this process, Burke turns to the study of rhetoric, with its overt appeal to the crowd. Often he finds a kinship between political manipulation and aesthetic response; though he sometimes acknowledges the

difference between the two, he fails to grapple with the task of defining this difference. (Mikics 245-246)

Mikics takes his analysis a step further, though, as he suggests that in many narratives, Shakespeare's included, the so-called "tragic hero" is not actually what he seems but, instead, a tool that authors, (again, Shakespeare included), use to manipulate the audience's perception of characters and plotlines:

Burke frequently tempts us to think we can choose structural myth over character, so that we won't be tricked by our sympathy for Shakespeare's heroes, but instead remain alert to how Shakespeare uses them to manipulate us. The tragic protagonist becomes a sacrifice brought forward to appease us; we can renounce and embrace him at once, and therefore go away reinforced in our biases. (Mikics 247)

In his review of the same text, author Tony Voss's article shares some of the same analysis as can be found by Mikics, including the importance of the audience's understanding a character, before the character can be wholly understood and supported.

Though Mikics and Voss outline many of the same ideas in their reviews of Burke and Shakespeare, Voss takes the audience's character analysis a step further, suggesting that the psychology behind each individual and collective audience is important, too⁵:

Burke called his rhetoric-oriented analysis of language and society 'Dramatism,' on the basis that most social exchange could be approached as a form of drama... [and that] Burke's insistence on asking basic questions about [Shakespeare's]

⁵ Alistair Anderson suggests a similar idea in his article *Enacted Metaphor: The Theatricality of the Entrepreneurial Process*, when he states, "theatre and other performance genres are forms of activities through which we get the opportunity to at ourselves – at our values, principles and modes of conducts." (587)

plays is an insistence on asking basic almost situationalist ethical questions about life. (Voss 17)

In the text *More Than Precious Memories: Rhetoric of Southern Gospel Music*, editors Michael Graves and David Filling share several articles that discuss multiple theories and their implications for various rhetorical artifacts. Particularly relevant to this analysis of *Wicked* and Burke's cycle is a chapter that discusses the guilt-purification-redemption cycle in relation to various memorials, with special attention given to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The chapter discusses the importance of and role played by the mementos left at memorials by visitors, whether in the form of photographs, letters, toys, or some other physical manifestation of a memory. According to the text, "each visitor [to a memorial] carries his or her own source of guilt. This guilt produces pain, and in order to decrease it, individual rituals of redemption are performed at the Memorial" (239). Due to the guilt carried by survivors, memorials are erected, items are left, and "metanarratives [or] master stories" are created to help purify the hearts and minds of the living (239). The article posits that psychologically, leaving items at memorials acts as a form of self-purification that people often believe, if done frequently enough, will provide an eventual redemption or relief from the guilt, pain, or shame that they feel.

In his text, *The Rhetoric of Redemption: Kenneth Burke's Drama and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s I Have a Dream Speech*, author David Bobbitt discusses the use of guilt and its role in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches, most notably his "I Have a Dream Speech," stating that "King's rhetorical strategy involved evoking a sense of guilt in white Americans" (36). Within his text, Bobbitt quotes August Maier's rhetorical analysis of King's I Have a Dream speech:

[King] unerringly knows how to exploit to maximum effectiveness ... [whites'] growing feeling of guilt ... with intuitive, but extraordinary skill, he not only castigates whites for their sins but, in contrast to angry young writers like [James] Baldwin, he explicitly states his belief in their salvation (Bobbitt 36).

Through the use of Burke's three-step cycle, Bobbitt states that King's speeches, intentionally or not, not only pointed out an issue but also offered a real opportunity for salvation, redemption and forgiveness in the eyes of the persecuted African-Americans.

In the article "If Your Roommate Dies, You Get a 4.0: Reclaiming Rumor with Burke and Organizational Culture," author Dean Scheibel discusses Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle in relation to rumors and their communicative power. According to Scheibel, "rumors create situations in which people come together, communicate, and collectively fight or reduce anxiety... rumors also serve to express, project, evade, or displace guilt" (n. pag.).

This article offers a somewhat different definition of guilt and states that it is any form of uneasiness or tension (n. pag.). These uneasy feelings or tensions are what cause people to create rumors, even if based in truth, to alleviate the pressure and attention on their own struggles in exchange for another's elevated pressure and tension.

The second stage of Burke's cycle, purification, can manifest itself in one of two ways – mortification, or victimizing. Mortification occurs when a person understands his or her wrongdoing, accepts the guilt, and ultimately works toward the redemption in a positive way, often in an act of self-sacrifice. Victimizing, though, uses other people as "scapegoats," and receives redemption in less honest ways. According to this article, rumors are used as a way of scapegoating for those individuals who seek purification through victimizing others rather than mortifying themselves (n. pag.).

In the article, “Practicing ‘Sorority Rush’: Mockery and the Dramatistic Rehearsing of Organizational Conversations,” by Deal Scheibel, Katie Gibson, and Carrie Anderson, sorority rushes, and the use of mockery and rehearsing are discussed in relation to Burke’s idea of guilt. According to the article, “rush parties” require a certain level of “projecting an image of someone not oneself” for both current sorority members, as well as those working to be invited into the group (219).

Prior to, as well as during, rush parties, current members must be trained how to interact properly with rushees during parties, and throughout the selection process. Therefore, it can be said that members are forced to rehearse and exhibit a new self. Alternatively, rushees must understand that mockery is a crucial part of most rushes, and they must willingly put themselves in a position to be teased, questioned, and ridiculed.

Also vital to Burke’s guilt-purification-redemption cycle, the article discusses the concept of hierarchy that is found in sorority rushes, with the current members ranked higher than the new rushees:

... [S]ocial tensions are the result of hierarchic divisions between people. For Burke, hierarchy refers to any kind of structured, value-charged, ranked order. Each hierarchy possesses numerous “thou shalt nots.” However, failure to live up to all of the “commandments” creates guilt. Hierarchic divisions- such as the division between sororities and prospective members- serve as a source of guilt, which is “inevitable in social relations.” (Scheibel, Gibson, Anderson 220-221)

Scheibel, Gibson, and Anderson suggest that while current members are prone to feeling a certain level of internal guilt, due to the “necessary evil” known as rushes, the action toward pledging rushees can be categorized as a way of member’s purification. It is suggested that

through scapegoating or sacrificing the dignity of others, the current sorority members are able to remove guilt and regain redemption through a figurative sacrificial or symbolic killing of rushees (221).

Previous Research on Theater and the Arts

In the text *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*, edited by John Russell Brown, the history of theater is considered in depth. Each chapter chronicles a specific time period, spanning from the ancient Greeks and Roman and Christian Europe, through the Renaissance, and to modern day theater. The text also considers theatrical characteristics in various parts of the world, including Africa and Asia, as well in various contexts, including theater post-World War I and II.

Each chapter in the collection is written by a different author, which offers differing expertise and perspective on the history, growth and change present in the world of theater. Though a different individual writes each chapter of the text, the movement from period to period, overall, is complete, comprehensive, and steady. The text's approach and historical accuracy about the world of theater and what is now called Broadway helps explain where theater began and how it has reached the place it has.

In the text *Strong Arts, Strong Schools: The Promising Potential and Shortsighted Disregard of the Arts in American Schooling*, author Charles Fowler suggests, "excellence in education and excellence in the arts seem to go hand in hand" (4). Further, Fowler attempts to explain why he feels students at more arts-based schools do better in academia. Fowler describes the importance of qualitative data as a direct complement to harder, precise, quantitative data (5). He suggests that allowing students to learn both sides of the same data offers a full perspective:

We need every possible way to represent, interpret, and convey our world for a very simple but powerful reason: No one of these ways offers a full picture. Individually, mathematics, science, and history convey only part of the reality of the world. Nor do the arts alone suffice. A multiplicity of symbol systems are required to provide a more complete picture and a more comprehensive education. (Fowler, 5)

The article also suggests that because the arts, “teach divergent rather than convergent thinking,” students are allowed to think ‘outside the box’ and are not held down by a right or wrong response (5). This acceptance of creative, broad thinking, also allows students to find meaning, and not simply data:

Dance and music do not add to our information overload. Their purpose is not to convey data but to supply insight and wisdom – in a word, meaning. Their power is that they can move us. They serve as connectors that give understanding a human dimension. They tell us about people... (Fowler, 7)

To Fowler, curricula that include the arts offer a fuller, more colorful, freeing option for students. In conclusion, Fowler states that education that includes the arts, “[invites] students to explore the emotional, intuitive, and irrational aspects of life that science is hard pressed to explain” (9). It is this invitation, and student’s accepting of artistic challenges, that Fowler believes makes, “the arts a mark of excellence in American schooling” (9)

In the article written by Arther Brooks, entitled “Who Opposes Government Arts Funding?,” arts programs in school are considered from a more political perspective, stating, “the right or responsibility of the public sector to subsidize and control art has been hotly contested” (355). With this political drama occurring, Brooks considers public opinion of government-run

arts programs, seeking to better understand, “the set of personal characteristics that associate with strong feelings on one side or the other” (356) The findings suggest that numerous characteristics affect the support or lack of support for governmentally subsidized arts and arts programs:

Several personal characteristics are commonly associated with strong opposition or support for public arts subsidies. These include a self-described conservative political ideology, the propensity to donate to the arts individually, and a number of demographic variables, such as sex, race, income, education, and religion (Brooks, 365).

This study was very specific and rather narrowly focused. In his research, Brooks only shows the support or lack of support of arts programs in relation to governmental funding, and did not directly discuss individual support of the arts overall. Despite the focused nature of the study, it still offers perspective on arts support and shows differing variables that can, and does, support the arts.

In Nick Rabkin and Robin Redmond’s article entitled “The Arts Make a Difference,” the slow decent of arts appreciation is discussed:

Two decades of efforts to raise standards, focus school on academic fundamentals, and close the achievement gap have steadily eroded the place of the arts in public education. Amid growing concern that U.S. students are falling behind internationally and that U.S. schools are insufficiently rigorous, the arts compete for a place at the education table with subjects that appear to make more compelling claims for time and resources. Broadly understood as affective and expressive – not academic or cognitive – the arts survive at the margins or

education as curriculum enrichments, rewards to good students, or electives for the talented. (Rabkin & Redmond n. pag.)

Arts programs, regardless of their overall decline in schools, are still counted as important to students and an edifying factor in their school's success. Rabkin and Redmond suggest, "arts-integrated programs are associated with academic gains across the curriculum as reflected in standardized test scores, and they appear to have more powerful effects on the achievement of struggling students than more conventional arts education programs do" (n. pag.). Furthermore, the article states that the gains went beyond basic and test scores:

Arts integration energized teachers and led to broader school changes. Schedules shifted to accommodate planning and sustained classroom attention to pursuing questions in depth. Parents became resources for student projects, and they came to school more often to see their children's work in performances or exhibitions. Teachers took on new leadership roles in planning and curriculum as their aspirations and morale rose. Art and music teachers became instructional resources for classroom teachers and the fulcrums of multiclass projects. (Rabkin and Redmond n. pag.)

Clearly, Rabkin and Redmond believe that arts are a necessary part of education and schooling on a day-to-day basis. Throughout the article, Rabkin and Redmond provide persuasive data and compelling statistics that exhibit the benefits that come from the arts, and the damage that occurs when students are not able to participate in them.

Previous Research on *Wicked*

Due to its fairly new status in the American Broadway culture, very few studies have yet been conducted on the megamusical⁶ phenomenon known as *Wicked*. The following several studies have, though, researched other characters, including Glinda⁷, the Good Witch; the Wonderful Wizard of Oz himself; and another secondary character to the *Wicked* storyline named Madame Morrible. Studies relating to these characters discuss humor, feminism, and leadership characteristics within the show's plot, and will be discussed further here.

In the text *The Wicked Truth*, written by Suzanne Ross, the production is critiqued “using political, social, and historical examples” (n. pag.). Song by song and conversation by conversation, Ross discusses the implications that accompany the main characters' thoughts and interactions. Within her text, Ross offers four, as she calls them, “mythological truths” that help create the mess found in Oz. After she explains her supposed myths, she concludes her text with four truths that, if used properly, could have saved the *Wicked* characters from so much pain.

The first myth defined by Ross is that, “evil can and must be identified with absolute certainty” (30). Behind the first Myth, Ross states, are three assumptions that prompt the Ozians' hatred of and desire for the destruction of the Wicked Witch: (1) Evil is somewhere outside our community, (2) We have the right and responsibility to destroy it, and (3) Only then will we have peace (34). This particular Myth, as well as its accompanying assumptions, are most apparent in the opening song entitled “No One Mourns the Wicked” and is the reason that the Ozians ask questions such as, “Why does wickedness happen,” and “Are people born wicked, or do they

⁶ A term originally created to describe Andrew Lloyd Webber's wildly popular Broadway plays, such as *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera* in the early 1980s.

⁷ At the beginning of *Wicked*, Glinda's name is Galinda. The name most viewers know, Glinda, is used during the Second Act. For the purposes of this research and analysis, the name Glinda will be used throughout the production for continuity and ease of reading.

have wickedness thrust upon them?” (35). Rather than accepting that all people are wicked, as well as genuinely good, the inhabitants of Oz reflect their emotions onto an easy target:

[R]ather than face their own wickedness- daily failure to express love, hurtful patterns of gossip and blaming, resentments, fits of anger- ... surrender all responsibility for these actions by projecting onto Elphaba their own hurtful experiences. (Ross 40)

This concept very easily parallels the first step of Burke’s cycle: guilt. It describes, straight from the Ozians’ mouths, the pressure and hatred Elphaba feels from others, and thanks to this particular song, the entire show is set up, with the Ozians blindness and the Witch losing the battle before it’s even begun.

The second myth described by Ross is “[w]e know we are good because we hate evil” (51). Though Ross does not add further assumptions with this particular Myth, she does combat this notion in great depth, pointing out that “[i]f you hate what you think is evil, you will become identical to it because hatred turns you into the twin of your enemy” (56). The next few musical numbers show unfortunate examples of hatred and the inability to coexist between the two main characters, Elphaba and Glinda, who have recently been forced to move into the same dorm room. In these next few songs, Ross claims that Glinda has become just as ‘evil’ as Elphaba, if not more so, because while Elphaba is simply acting out of self-preservation, Glinda is actively seeking the downfall of her roommate.

The third myth makes things, once again, a bit more complicated, and states, “[t]here are two kinds of violence – Good Violence and Bad Violence” (65). Good Violence is defined as the violence used to “save the world from destruction” (66). Bad Violence, on the other hand, is the violence used by the socially accepted “bad guy,” and is the violence that injures the socially

deemed innocent and peace. Ross discusses the acceptance of Good Violence over Bad Violence further:

We cheer, of course, because we believe the [Good] Violence is necessary to protect innocent people from being victims of [Bad] Violence at the hands of the evil enemy. Violence wielded by the good guys is used to prevent the violence of the bad guys and we believe it is perfectly justified. (Ross 66)

In the Land of Oz, Good Violence is clearly that of Glinda and the Wizard, while Bad Violence is that of Elphaba – or is it? At this point, most of the way through Act One, viewers begin to see that just as the Ozians, maybe they too have been confused and accepted the wrong interpretation of their information. Just as audiences begin to see the confusion occurring in Oz, Ross offers the fourth and most absolute of the four myths, what she calls the “Sacrificial Formula” (74). This, she states, is the idea that “[s]omeone can be sacrificed for my good or the good of my community. The End justifies the Means” (74).

Unfortunately, though, this Sacrificial Formula leads to blindness and confusion. At its most basic level, Ross states that this Formula leads to ignorance and an attitude of “nothing matters, except your own happiness – certainly not the suffering of one victim” (77). This selfish attitude is what ends the first act, and is what controls the entire second act of *Wicked*. This absolute power found in the Sacrificial Formula leads to both Glinda and the Wizard’s seeing themselves as god-like figures in Oz, popular boy Fiyero’s having a change of heart too late to make a difference, and a headmistress’s continual fighting to squelch what is truly right in the world of Oz.

To complete her text, Ross defines the four truths that could have brought a very different outcome to the Land of Oz. First is the notion that “[e]veryone is capable of being both good and

evil,” the second being that “[e]vil hides by accusing others of being evil,” third being that, “[t]here is no Good Violence or Bad Violence; there is only violence,” and finally, “The means become the end” (210). In some of the character’s lives, audiences see these ideals coming to the forefront, even if too late, while other characters continue to live in ignorant bliss, leading to their own demise. Either way, Ross, in defining both Ozian tainted truth and what could be ironically called “truthful truth,” offers insight to Elphaba’s character both before and after she is defined as ‘wicked,’ as well as the actions of those around her that lead to the unfortunate curtain close of the play.

In her article entitled “Witch or Reformer? Character Transformation Through the Use of Humor in the Musical *Wicked*,” author Valerie Lynn Schrader discusses two commonly used female stereotypes that are present within the show’s music and dialogue. Two other topics discussed are the use of humor and the ways that characters use it to either maintain or change their (or other’s) positions within the social hierarchy at Shiz University and in Ozian culture.

The first stereotype is that of the “reformer,” which, though most notably used in nineteenth-century humor, has “historically emerged as a result of the clash between the vulgar and genteel, with women identified as genteel and men as vulgar” (51). As the audience watches Elphaba’s life unfold, her identity as a so-called reformer is continually reinforced, as she seeks to make those around her “good” while suffering multiple setbacks that result in backfiring tactics and her ultimate destruction.

Though her role as a reformer is somewhat camouflaged in Act One, it comes clearly to the surface at the beginning of Act Two, with her love interest Fiyero’s decision to defend his romantic feelings for her openly— thus freeing him from the facade that he cared for Glinda (55). With Elphaba’s encouragement, Fiyero leaves the life of a shallow, selfish, and immature man

and becomes the Head Guard for the Wizard's army and a confident citizen of Oz. Elphaba is able to *reform* her new beau for the better.

The "dumb blonde" persona that Schrader presents describes none other than that of Elphaba's friend, Glinda the Good Witch. When the transition from film to Broadway was made, Glinda's character is augmented physically just as is Elphaba's personality. Glinda is originally presented as a beautiful young woman in Baum's book and a dignified, middle-aged woman in the MGM movie; however, Broadway presents her as "a popular 'dumb blonde' who is obsessed with public spotlight..." (58). Clearly, Glinda's initially shallow, self-absorbed character is in direct contrast to Elphaba's willingness to be an outcast if it means standing up for beliefs and defending what is right.

Aside from the stereotypical roles of women in literature, *Wicked* also utilizes humor to show two very different personalities in its characterizations of both Elphaba and Glinda. Many times throughout the play, Elphaba uses humor that is "self-deprecating," as a self-defense mechanism, making comments such as, "As you can see, [my sister] is a perfectly normal color" (53).

Glinda, on the other hand, uses humor to raise herself up in the eyes of her peers, while, at the same time, reinforcing Elphaba's low self-esteem and social status. In many cases, Glinda's condescending humor and gestures are not her own ideas, but rather suggestions given to her by others. Unfortunately, her love of the spotlight and popularity create situations in which Glinda cannot pass over the opportunity to shine. A perfect example of Glinda's trickery is the Wicked Witch's black, pointed hat, which was originally a gift for Glinda from her aunt. Due to the fact that it was too gaudy, she, as a joke, convinces Elphaba that it is "all the rage" and

should be worn to the evening's dance party. At the end of the evening, Elphaba is embarrassed and Glinda is able to remain atop the social totem pole in Oz.

Because of the defensive nature of Elphaba's statements and Glinda's inability to see past her own popularity and image, neither character seems to understand just how detrimental her so-called humorous words and actions are. Unfortunately, most of the negative humor throughout the play is at Elphaba's expense, and this leads not only to an unpopular, damaged young lady, but an apparently wicked woman seeking reconciliation for the pain her peers, family, and eventually the Wizard have caused.

In their article *Women, Leadership, and Power Revisiting the Wicked Witch of the West*, Sharon D. Kruse and Sandra S. Prettyman discuss the "cultural images present in... *Wicked*, [and address] cultural norms and biases toward women in leadership and women's leadership practices..." (451). Though some authors (Rogers; Schwartz) consider the chronicles of Oz to be matriarch-based, this article suggests the complete opposite. According to Kruse and Prettyman, throughout the *Wicked* production, the three leading women become active participants in keeping themselves below men (in this case, the Wizard) in status.

The first character discussed is Madame Morrible, who is Elphaba and Glinda's headmistress and sorcery teacher at Shiz University. She also serves as press secretary for the Wizard and is therefore able to utilize highly manipulative and controlling tactics to gain what she wants. According to the article, Madame Morrible "adopts [a traditionally] masculine model of leadership" by controlling "public perception" in Oz (456). Glinda is also discussed as a direct contrast to Morrible, as she "adopts [a traditionally] feminine model of leadership and power" with a "carefully polished external persona [that] offers [her] insurance against potential negative evaluation" (457).

The final character discussed in this article, Elphaba, is in a category all her own, as she is described as someone who uses “resistance and [positions herself] as the ‘other’” (458). Rather than blindly siding with the Wizard, Elphaba chooses to “exercise [her own] intelligence... potential... and ambition,” which leads to her “forsaking [all] traditional models and paths to leadership” (458). However, Elphaba cannot hide from her unique external characteristics, and thus she “attempts to hide her powers, lest she become the center of even greater, unwanted attention” (459).

Elphaba is one of the only characters in the production of *Wicked* that is able to see past the Wizard’s falsehoods to his true nature. It is her willingness to stand up to authority for what is right, that causes her to be “cast... as both [an] outsider and resistor” (459). Because of pain experienced in her past, Elphaba spends the entire play looking for acceptance and love, but unlike Morrible and Glinda, she never becomes a slave to falsely earned leadership, power or prestige.

In her article *A Parable, A Pearl and “Popular”? How the Broadway Musical Wicked – Especially Elphaba’s Character- May Assist Adolescent Girls to Claim Their Uniqueness*, author Carol L. Schnabl Schweitzer, a youth pastor with years of experience working closely with teenaged girls at their most pivotal moments in life, utilizes a biblical worldview to describe how, Elphaba, though she is perceived as “evil” by those around her, can actually be an inspiration to teenaged and adolescent girls.

Briefly discussed in Schweitzer’s article is the parable of the pearl found in Matthew 13, verses 45 and 46: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is similar to a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

Essentially, as Schweitzer suggests, this verse describes “[a] merchant [who] is on a journey of discovery and the ‘find’ exceeds his expectations so he willingly sells everything in order to enjoy this one pearl of ‘great value’” (3). Generally speaking, the article concludes that “there are persons (the merchant included) who are terribly earnest about finding an ultimate meaning for their lives, and they may spend years and substantial resources in their quest” (3).

Just as the merchant in this parable found his heart’s desire in his discovered pearl, so does Elphaba when, in the final moments of the play, the audience learns that she has only staged her death and is now free to live a private life away from Oz’s prying eyes. Both Elphaba and the merchant within the parable are able to find their happiness, but only after careful thought, creative searching and a severe sacrifice. Elphaba is, to some, considered a rebel, but to others, she possesses valuable traits including independence, authenticity, an outspoken nature, and the ability to think critically – all attributes that, if used properly can be major assets to a successful life (6).

In the end, Schweitzer concludes that it is exactly what Elphaba hates most about herself, her green tinted skin, that makes her most able to “‘defy gravity’ and live completely and fully [in] her own unique identity” (2). Though she struggles through many trials and misunderstandings, Elphaba remains her true self and ultimately leaves a legacy after her apparent demise. Schweitzer suggests that adolescent girls should do the same as Elphaba, and support causes and faith that will ultimately leave a legacy of their own.

In their text *Wizard of Oz and Philosophy*, editors Randall Auxier and Phillip Seng have compiled numerous articles that discuss Baum’s original text, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the 1939 MGM film titled *The Wizard of Oz*, as well as the Broadway production of *Wicked* and

their implications for the field of philosophy. Two articles in particular are relevant to this study of *Wicked*.

In the article “*Wicked* Feminism,” author Pam Sailors compares (but mostly contrasts) the characters of the Wicked Witch in the Broadway production *Wicked* and Dorothy in MGM’s film *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Throughout the production of *Wicked*, “Elphaba demolishes all the many feminine stereotypes that Dorothy reinforces” (291). When considering the context of Dorothy’s creation and Elphaba’s creation, it makes perfect sense that the two characters are so incredibly different. Dorothy’s author was living at the turn of the century, when women barely showed an ankle in public and spent much of their time at home caring for their children. Elphaba, on the other hand, is a post-feminist movement creation and exhibits that very clearly. Sailors states that, overall, there are three major differences between the two characters:

Unlike Dorothy, Elphaba leaves her home behind to fight the injustices she has encountered. And unlike Dorothy, Elphaba has no clear or consistent protector. And completely unlike Dorothy, Elphaba is the perfect embodiment of a ‘feminist hero.’ (Sailors 291)

Unlike Dorothy, who spends her entire time in Oz trying to get back home, to the comfort, safety and protection of the familiar, Elphaba willingly leaves all those niceties for a cause that she finds more important than her own well-being.

In his article “I’m Not That Girl,” Richard Greene discusses the difference between the words wicked and evil in relation to *Wicked*’s main character, Elphaba. In his words, “a central theme of *Wicked* is the nature of evil, raising the question of what makes a person wicked” (305). Throughout the article, Greene considers multiple facets of a person’s reputation in attempt to understand if Elphaba is rightly or wrongly accused of being “evil” *as well as* “wicked”:

Elphaba certainly performs actions that lead to bad consequences- among other things she causes bodily harm and death, commits crimes, and plots a political assassination. Moreover, she practices witchcraft and routinely casts spells taken from a book of black magic- the Grimmerie. Alternatively, she is a dutiful sister and daughter, a loyal friend, devotes herself to rectifying injustices towards Animals⁸ brought about by a corrupt government, and has generally good intentions, despite the bad results her actions occasionally bring. (Greene 305)

In his conclusion, Greene highlights Elphaba herself, describing her own opinion of herself, stating that Elphaba saw her own life as a failure, as very few things ever turned out as she intended. Despite his overall analysis, though, Greene comes to an inconclusive conclusion, stating that it is up to each reader or viewer to decide for himself or herself whether good intentions truly outweigh the disastrous results that Elphaba receives, and whether she is wicked or evil.

Other Research on *Wicked*

In his book *Finding Oz: How L. Frank Baum Discovered The Great American Story*, author Evan Schwartz gives a history of Oz, beginning with L. Frank Baum's life and finishing with the *Wicked* production. In her biography, titled *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz*, author Katherine Rogers follows the same historical timeline as Schwartz, offering insight to L. Frank Baum's life and the public's welcome of just about any story or production associated with the word Oz. Of the Broadway show, Schwartz highlights its popularity:

Wicked, Gregory Maguire's best-selling book, tells the ingenious backstory of the Wicked Witch of the West, and the stage adaptation has gone on to become the

⁸ Animals, capitalized, are the animals that are able to speak. By capitalizing their title, they are shown to be superior to those animals who cannot talk.

most successful musical extravaganza in recent times, a phenomenon on Broadway and in dozens of cities worldwide. (Schwartz 312)

Rogers states that “Baum’s greatest gifts were the two most important ones for a writer of fantasy: he could create a wonderful world, and he could make it believable” (Rogers, 243).

Though Schwartz recognizes that *Wicked* is very different from the original Baum story, he sees the believability of Baum’s text carrying over to the stage adaptation and states “audiences admire not only originality [like that of *Wicked*] but also [have] respect for the spirit of the original” (Schwartz, 312).

In the book *Wicked: A Musical Biography*, author Paul Laird compares the original *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the MGM film, *The Wizard of Oz*, the Gregory Maguire novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch*, and the *Wicked* production on Broadway. Laird states that those creating *Wicked* did not take their jobs, or their work, lightly. Throughout his text he cites the changes between these four Oz iterations, with examples of set lists, songs in each act, character descriptions and other vital pieces to make the show a show:

[Stephen] Schwartz and [Winnie] Holzman have been relentless in their pursuit of what they consider the perfect script for the show, with rewrites occurring right up until the moment the show opened on Broadway, and then additional work continuing for more than three years after the successful premiere. (Laird 86)

David Cote, in his text, *The Grimmerie*, so-named after Elphaba’s magical book of spells in the production, discusses some of behind-the-scenes work that goes into the success of *Wicked*. With chapters dedicated to the writing of the script and music, costuming and make-up, original casting, actor biographies, character information, and much more, Cote’s text is perfect for anyone wanting *Wicked* insight.

Conclusion

The application of Kenneth Burke's cycle will be similar to some of the studies previously mentioned. This analysis will analyze the narrative representing Elphaba's life and seek to find and understand the points of guilt, purification, and redemption within the Wicked Witch of the West's *Wicked* storyline.

Just as L. Frank Baum's text *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* was incredibly well-received upon its release, so was *Wicked*, which, in many ways, is a modern-day *Oz*, both in storyline and in popularity. Released in 2003, *Wicked* has won 31 awards since it opened, including three Tony Awards in 2004 and a Grammy in 2005. In 2011, the show won an Audience Award for Favorite Long Running Show, which demonstrates that almost nine years after the curtain's first ascent, audiences still love the story, characters and events found within *Wicked*'s production.

For years, studies have been conducted and analyses written of the *Wicked* characters, events and implications, but there seems to be very few analyses, if any, that consider only the Wicked Witch. Most studies of the past have focused on other characters, or at most, their interactions with Elphaba, but this analysis will take out the "extra" variables, and focus solely on the Witch and her life and struggles.

Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle will allow for a comparison between her actions and their intention, whether due to her guilt, hoping for her purification, or looking for her redemption. In one of the *Wicked*'s most 'popular' musical numbers, "Popular," Elphaba's roommate Glinda the Good sings, "Don't be offended by my frank analysis. Think of it as personality dialysis," and just like Glinda, this study seeks to understand the woman who is shrouded in mystery. Chapter Three: Methodology, will further describe how and why the theory

of guilt-purification-redemption cycle can be applied to various facets of the show, including the scripts, lyrics, costuming, and numerous interactions Elphaba has with other characters.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Something has changed within me, something is not the same.

I'm through with playing by the rules of someone else's game.

Too late for second guessing, too late to go back to sleep; it's time

to trust my instincts, close my eyes, and leap.

-Elphaba, "Defying Gravity"

For this analysis, Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle will be applied to the life of Elphaba, as seen in *Wicked's* Broadway production. This cycle describes three distinct phases in a person's life: guilt, caused by some uncomfortable situation or force, the need for purification through one of two ways, and finally, the redemption a person hopefully receives.

Though Burke himself was somewhat vague in his description of guilt, it is widely defined as "a sense of responsibility or shame for having done wrong" (Bobbitt 33). The second phase of the cycle, known as purification, can be achieved in one of two ways: mortification or victimizing. Mortification is a process of accepting the guilt and the actions that caused it, while actively working toward redemption, most frequently in the form of self-sacrifice (Lewis, 132). Unfortunately, though, in many ways, Mortification is not completely redemptive, which can be painful and can lead to unresolved conclusions (134). The alternative to mortification is what is called victimizing, and relies on a scapegoat to blame. This option requires the guilty person to blame another.

The third and final phase in Burke's cycle is redemption, which is achieved when the person is finally "reconciled with [his or her] past" (31). This final step of the cycle relies on grace from others, and unfortunately, the necessary grace often does not come, but it, nonetheless is the most important part of Burke's three-piece cycle.

Currently, *Wicked* is a production that is only viewable on Broadway. The show has not yet been converted to a film. Furthermore, *Wicked* cannot be recorded, as there are strict policies prohibiting viewers from doing so. Because of these regulations that limit the show's content being reproduced, this analysis will rely heavily on an online version of the script, an original Broadway soundtrack, and various photographs released by the *Wicked* creators.

This study will analyze the script, lyrics, costuming, and cross-character interactions to more clearly understand where exactly these three phases occur in Elphaba's life, if they occur more than once, or if they occur at all. Though this analysis is focused primarily on Elphaba's character, others will be considered if he or she relates directly to Elphaba's progression to a new phase, or falling back into a previous one.

Within Chapter Three: Methodology, Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle's intended application to *Wicked* was detailed. With the proposed study explained in more detail, it is now much easier to discuss the examples of guilt, purification, and ultimate redemption throughout *Wicked* and in Elphaba's life. These three steps, of guilt, purification and redemption in Elphaba's life will be highlighted in Chapter Four: Discussion.

Chapter Four: Discussion

No good deed goes unpunished; all helpful urges should be circumvented.

Sure, I meant well - well, look at what well meant did.

All right, enough - so be it, so be it, then. Let all Oz be agreed,

I'm wicked through and through. I promise no good deed

will I attempt to do again... Ever again.

- Elphaba, "No Good Deed"

Introduction

Guilt is a present theme throughout the entire production of *Wicked*, with the beginning of the play finding Elphaba already feeling guilty. Elphaba's cycle slips quickly back and forth between guilt and purification, as she is always trying to right past wrongs. Unfortunately, though, the majority of her plans backfire, which often creates more Guilt.

It could be said that throughout the entire production, Elphaba is in a constant battle between her guilt and her purification. In each relationship with another person, Elphaba feels guilt— some that is understandable, and some unnecessary. As Elphaba makes amends with one situation, she frequently throws herself into another experience that brings her pain. Even her best intentions bring her shame, pain, and, as Burke defines it: guilt. As the story of *Wicked* unfolds, more and more guilt is piled atop Elphaba's already burdened conscious, and eventually she reaches her breaking point, singing "My road of good intentions lead where such roads always lead. No good deed goes unpunished." Throughout Chapter Four: Discussion, there will be a detailed description of the various facets of the *Wicked* production that prove valuable to better understanding Elphaba's character. After discussing the show's script, lyrics, costuming, and several other character's interactions with Elphaba, Chapter Four: Discussion will end with

an explanation of Elphaba's guilt, purification, and redemption, as these three steps are seen within the show.

Details on *Wicked*

Script

The first words that an audience ever hears Elphaba speak are essentially a window into her soul and the pain she holds. Soon after arriving at Shiz University, Elphaba, due to her green skin, receives questioning looks and raised eyebrows from her classmates. Without hesitation, Elphaba shrieks, "What? What are you looking at? Oh, do I have something in my teeth? Okay, let's get this over with. No, I'm not seasick. Yes, I've always been green. No, I didn't chew grass as a child!... Oh, this is my younger sister. As you can see, she is a perfectly normal color."

The show is full of painful scenarios and experiences. Audiences see Elphaba facing familial pressure, problems with her peers, and feelings of inadequacy. Three situations in particular speak volumes to the inner turmoil that Elphaba faces. Fundamentally, Elphaba wants to be normal, and she wants to be treated the same as others. In spite of those desires, though, Elphaba has learned to build walls around herself, so that no one can hurt her intentionally or accidentally. The entire show is a back and forth between acceptance and hatred, as Elphaba is thrown between hoping for the future, and unforeseen disaster.

The first scene audiences see that demonstrates Elphaba's loneliness occurs just after her first history class with her favorite professor, Doctor Dillamond. After discovering vandalism on his chalk board, Dillamond dismisses class early to collect himself and to be alone. Elphaba understands the isolation Dillamond feels and decides to stay and comfort her saddened teacher. When speaking to her professor, who has told her to go eat lunch with her peers, rather than spend time with him, Elphaba matter of factly states, "Oh, that's alright... I have no friends."

The second, and more clearly stated, example of the inner turmoil Elphaba faces is seen in her discussions with Fiyero. Fiyero is Shiz University's most popular male student and is pursued by, not surprisingly, Glinda, the most popular female. The two feel that because they are perfect as individuals, they must be perfect for each other. Sadly, Elphaba has a soft spot for Fiyero but feels that she is not good enough for his good looks and outgoing demeanor. The first act of the production shows Glinda and Fiyero together all the time, with Glinda planning their future wedding, children and life together (all unknown to Fiyero). The second act, though, shows a shift in Fiyero's heart, as he learns that there really is more to life than popularity and having fun. He falls madly in love with Elphaba and makes it known to all.

Other than Glinda, Fiyero is the only person lucky enough to see Elphaba without her walls up. He is able to see her heart and that is what changes his mind and teaches him that Elphaba, not Glinda, is worth his time and effort. Though he cares deeply for Elphaba, Fiyero struggles to understand her actions and bitterness towards others and herself. He questions her motives and emotions, and Elphaba cannot help but snap in frustration.

In a moment of contention between Elphaba and Fiyero, Elphaba screams, "Do you think I want to be this way? Do you think I want to care this much? Don't you know how much easier my life would be if I didn't?" For most of the first act, Elphaba has been maintaining an uncaring, unmovable facade to those around her, but in this moment, she is vulnerable, and she is tired of pretending to be strong. She desires a different life and is frustrated because she knows that her different life will never come.

The third example of Elphaba's inability to accept the present and deep desire for a different future comes after a discussion with the Wizard. After one of Elphaba's spells has gone wrong and the Wizard has shared his plan to destroy Animals, Elphaba cannot believe that the

man she once held in such high esteem could be so evil. After being challenged for her motives, Elphaba tells the Wizard, “Don’t you know I wish I could? That I could go back to the time when I believed you were wonderful? The Wonderful Wizard of Oz? Nobody believed in you more than I did.” Similar to her altercation with Fiyero, Elphaba cannot accept herself and projects those feelings onto others, including the Wizard. Just as Elphaba is unable to accept herself, she is unable to understand why the Wizard is who he is and does what he does.

Lyrics

Similar to the show’s script, the lyrics and musical numbers found throughout the show center around Elphaba and her life. As clearly as the script exhibits, and possibly even more, the songs chronicle Elphaba’s life cycle and memorable experiences. Because *Wicked* is a musical, in many cases, it is the lyrics, dance, and words sung, rather than spoken, that mold the show’s characters and events.

Though there are numerous other characters and storylines presented, it is fair to say that the story of Elphaba is what keeps the plot of *Wicked* progressing from scene to scene and song to song. With each song in the *Wicked* production, viewers see the story of Elphaba grow and change. Though each song in the show is important, there are five in particular of special importance to Elphaba and her journey through guilt, purification and redemption: “The Wizard and I,” “Something Bad,” “Defying Gravity,” “No Good Deed,” and “For Good.”

The song “The Wizard and I” occurs right after Elphaba is told that she not only has the special, desirable talent of magic but also that it is a talent that could allow her to meet and possibly work for the Wizard of Oz. Understandably, Elphaba, who has always been perceived as a social outcast, is thrilled that she could be not only tolerated but sought after by someone as

important as the Wizard. Throughout the song, Elphaba is seen daydreaming, fantasizing and planning just how her meeting with the Wizard will go:

[O]nce I'm with the Wizard, my whole life will change, 'cuz once you're with the Wizard no thinks you're strange. No father is not proud of you, and no sister acts ashamed, and all of Oz has to love you, when by the Wizard you're acclaimed.
 ("The Wizard and I")

Not only does Elphaba believe that she will be loved and cherished by the Wizard, she also wholeheartedly believes that he will be able to fix the one ailment that has always plagued her: the color of her skin:

And one day he'll say to me, "Elphaba, a girl who is so superior, shouldn't a girl who's so good inside have a matching exterior? And since folks here to an absurd degree seem fixated on your verdigris, would it be alright by you if I degreenify you?" ("The Wizard and I")

Once she is told that she is special, Elphaba holds her head a bit higher and is better able to cope with her classmates and their treatment of her skin and magical abilities.

The second song of particular importance is when her abilities collide with a newfound cause when a professor at Shiz University, Doctor Dillamond, introduces Elphaba to a social and political injustice occurring around Oz:

I've heard of an ox, a professor from Quox, no longer permitted to teach, who has lost all powers of speech. And an owl in Munchkin Rock, a vicar with a thriving flock, forbidden to preach, now he only can screech! Only rumors, but still, enough to give pause to anyone with paws. Something bad is happening in Oz.

Just after Doctor Dillamond's confessions and concerns of Animal treatment are shared, Elphaba states that if something is happening that is changing Animals, someone "has got to tell the Wizard – that's why we have a Wizard! So nothing bad, nothing truly bad... it couldn't happen here in Oz" ("Something Bad").

After her conversation with Doctor Dillamond, Elphaba becomes all the more interested in meeting with the Wizard, not only to feed her own ambitions and needs, but also so that she may share her concerns with him, in hopes of his rectifying the Animal's problems. Unfortunately, the Wizard has other, darker, motives, and Elphaba sees that he will not treat her, or the Animals, as they deserve. Inadvertently, Elphaba hurts a monkey, Chistery, turning him into a flying monkey, and when she sees his pain and refuses to assist the Wizard in mutating and injuring both animals and Animals, the Wizard threatens her, and she is forced into hiding. Before she goes, though, she shares several minutes with Glinda.

Whereas Glinda is willing to forego moral actions in order to gain fame and prestige, Elphaba cannot follow suit and chooses to stand for what is right. After a life of struggle and pain, Elphaba frees herself from the stigmas and stereotypes she has faced her entire life:

So if you care to find me, look to the western sky. As someone told me lately, everyone deserves the chance to fly! And if I'm flying solo, at least I'm flying free! To those who ground me, take a message back from me! Tell them how I am defying gravity! I'm flying high, defying gravity! And soon I'll match them in renown, and nobody in all of Oz... no Wizard that there is or was... is ever going to bring me down! ("Defying Gravity")

These are the final words that Elphaba sings before the curtain descends on act one. Between the first and second act of *Wicked*, several months, if not years, have passed.

Act Two opens with an engagement party for Glinda and Fiyero (unfortunately, Fiyero was unaware of his own engagement). Whereas everything seems to be going well for Glinda, Elphaba is not blessed with the same happiness. Act Two shows Elphaba's descent into darkness, and, as she calls it, "wickedness."

Elphaba sings the song "No Good Deed," and audiences learn that in the assumed time lapse between Act One and Two, she has apparently continued to hurt those who she has meant to help. Elphaba sings of her sister, Nessa, her professor, Doctor Dillamond, and her love interest, Fiyero, who is now engaged to her former best friend. Elphaba begins to question her motives and her abilities:

[O]ne question haunts and hurts too much, too much to mention. Was I really seeking good or just seeking attention? Is that all good deeds are when looked at with an ice cold eye? If that's all good deeds are, maybe that's the reason why no good deed goes unpunished. ("No Good Deed")

After this song, the production appears to sync with the story of the Wizard of Oz, as viewers see Witch Hunters attempting to find and destroy the Witch, and it is understood that a little girl from a land far away is seeking her downfall, as well. At her most vulnerable moment, the only friend that Elphaba has ever had appears and helps her work through what is happening and what is to come.

The song, "For Good," is a song that describes two friends, looking back into their past, seeking forgiveness, acceptance, and comfort. Both Elphaba and Glinda share that though they regret their past decisions, they understand each other's point of view, and love each other in spite of circumstances:

It well may be, that we will never meet again in this lifetime, so let me say before we part, so much of me is made of what I learned from you. You'll be with me, like a handprint on my heart. And now whatever way our stories end, I know you have re-written mine by being my friend. ("For Good")

These five songs, "The Wizard and I," "Something Bad," "Defying Gravity," "No Good Deed," and "For Good," better than any others in the show, show the progression of Elphaba's desperation and pain through insecurity and questioning, to ultimate restoration and acceptance of herself and others.

Costuming

Attire

Visually, Elphaba has two very distinct looks within the storyline. The first is a school uniform that she is required to wear while attending classes at Shiz University. The second, very different look is what she wears after leaving school and finally accepts, and even embraces, the role as of the Wicked Witch.

For most of the first act, Elphaba's character is seen in her Shiz University uniform, a knee length kilt-style skirt and a blocky suit jacket – both in a dark blue black color. Her hair is in a long braid and in many of the scenes she is wearing a knitted hat and rimmed glasses. Elphaba's appearance in this particular act visually depicts a distinct desire to fit in, while still maintaining a level of individuality and uniqueness.

Shiz University requires that all students wear a similarly styled uniform both during class and while out and about on campus. David Cote, author of *The Grimmerie*, discusses the costuming of Shiz University, stating, "[S]tudent fashion at Shiz University looks diverse and

highly individualist, but that's an illusion: all of the outfits are school uniforms, using the same Shiz blue-and-white striped pattern" (n. pag.)

The only two characters that do not abide by the fashion rules constituted by Shiz are Glinda, who wears a "frilly and ultra-feminine" bleached white outfit, and Elphaba who appears in a dark navy outfit that can be described as nothing less than "drab." (Cote, n. pag.) The differing color of Elphaba's clothing parallels her skin tone; just as she is obviously different physically, so is her clothing different from every other person's on campus. Color aside, Elphaba's attire is structured similarly to her peers', which shows a genuine desire to look and feel 'normal' at school and to be like everyone else, even if that goal is never achieved.

Throughout the play, Elphaba cannot help but attack herself, using destructive sarcasm at her own expense, pointing out and mocking her differences - whether it is her skin tone, her inability to fit in socially, or her knack for catching on to subjects that others despise. Almost on her own accord, Elphaba ensures that she is not viewed like anyone else in the world. Costume designer Susan Hilferty states that Elphaba's large jacket allows her to always "keep her hands in her pockets. [She is]... a young girl trying to hide herself" (Cote 120).

The costuming chosen at Shiz is one way that producers ensure that the audience never forgets the fact that Elphaba, try as she may to fit in, is always an "other." The end of the first act sees an angry, frustrated young girl accepting that there is a bigger picture. Elphaba decides that she does not need to fit in, as she would much rather do the right thing than have a plethora of friendships.

Due to the fact that she finally accepts her role as a wicked presence in Oz, for the second act of *Wicked*, Elphaba's character is transformed radically, both with new make-up and new costuming. Make-up designer Joseph Delude II states that during intermission, to get a truly

“evil” look onstage, “we arch and extend her eyebrows. We smudge the eyeliner, put some lashes on, increase the contour on her eyes, cheeks, and jaw line... she’s more witchy, but in a glamorous way” (Cote 129). Though she is angry, bitter and frustrated, Elphaba never loses her simple, sophisticated beauty.

Costuming also helps to ensure a visually obvious change between the acts, as Elphaba is no longer in a drab, boxy school uniform but dressed as a “formidable, sultry sorceress” (Cote n. pag.). Elphaba is finally seen wearing what audiences have always seen her in – a long, dark dress and cape, a pointed hat, and carrying a broomstick.

When designing Elphaba’s second act costume, Hilferty selected clothing that had earthy undertones:

I see [Elphaba] as connected to things that are inside the earth. So the patterns and textures I wove into her dress include fossils, stalactites, or striations you see when you crack a stone apart. I mixed different colors into her skirt, so everything is literally twisted. (Cote 120)

For the second act costuming, *Wicked* producers did not have to create a new façade as they simply used a younger looking version of MGM’s witchy attire. By using familiar costuming, structure and style, Elphaba becomes the character that viewers have always known, understood, and expected. By bringing the costuming back to the familiar and finishing with Elphaba’s attire similar to that of the MGM movie, audiences are left with a decision: Is she Elphaba, the misunderstood young girl? Or is she the Wicked Witch, charged with harassing Dorothy and causing havoc in Oz? Audiences have seen both sides, but who will they choose to side with?

Make-Up

In the production of *Wicked*, the make-up relies heavily on the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) film for influence, rather than L. Frank Baum's novel. The MGM film, not Baum's story, is what spread the idea of a green skinned Witch. It is worth considering the green skin of MGM's film, as it directly affected the make-up selection for *Wicked*. Though it appears to some that MGM's changes were arbitrary, there are two reasons for the Witch's new film appearance. The first reason was the new Technicolor technology, and the second was to create a memorable and truly evil persona.

The first reason for the Witch's new skin tone is one that is not based as much on the character herself, but instead, as a result of new technology being used by MGM at the time of *The Wizard of Oz*'s release. The first few sequences of *The Wizard of Oz* are sepia-toned, but as soon as Dorothy steps into Oz, her world changes to be over the top and magnificently colored.

The producers of the film decided to play with this new Technicolor technology in order to make the movie and its characters that much more interesting. True *Oz* fans know that the Witch's skin was not the only change made when recreating the original *Oz* fairy tale. Perhaps one of the most well-known film artifacts to date, Dorothy's ruby red slippers were actually silver in the Baum text, not ruby. Both the slippers and the Witch were changed to a different color in order to stand out on screen, rather than fading into the colorful Oz backdrop.

As for the specific color green, there does not seem to be any concrete evidence as to why MGM producers and costume designers chose it over other colors. Through the years, green has become a color of "evil" in the film industry, most notably in Disney films. Disney's use of the color of green can be found in the eyes of most of their villains, including *Snow White*'s Evil Queen and Huntsman, *Cinderella*'s Lady Tremaine, *The Rescuers*' Madame Medusa, *Lion*

King's Scar, *Sleeping Beauty's* Maleficent, and *Beauty and the Beast's* Gaston. Comic books also use the color green to symbolize great power in characters such as Green Hornet, Green Mask, Green Lantern, Green Goblin, and Green Arrow.

MGM's Wicked Witch of the West wears a high-necked dress, flowing cape, pointed shoes and oversized hat, all of which are black. Many look at the Witch's character and believe that she is nothing more than a cliché or stereotype, but that is exactly what makes her presence on screen so incredibly memorable. Baum's text sought to create a story where "the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated," and instead, "wonderment and joy are retained and the heart-aches and nightmares are left out" (Rogers 90). MGM's did not feel the need to cut out the same mythological characters and themes.

Instead, it appears that MGM intentionally created a character that embraced each and every previously utilized stereotype for a Witch, right down to the mole on her chin. Short of changing the Wicked Witch's skin color, MGM did not have to do much creative brainstorming to create a memorable witch. Most Americans (both today and at the time of *Oz's* release) would describe the quintessential Witch as an ugly old woman, flying on a broom by night, creating potions in a cauldron, and wearing a pointed hat. Because the stereotype was already so engrained in the minds of viewers, MGM did not have to work to create an obviously evil character. Instead, they utilized the already understood and agreed upon characteristics to embody the evil of the witch in the film. By using these evil characteristics, the Wicked Witch of the West presented by filmmakers became infinitely more intimidating than the cartoon character of Baum's story.

With this in mind, it can be said that the make-up used for Elphaba is another way in which the creators of *Wicked* kept the character familiar while still putting their own adaptation

on the stage. In the film adaptation of *The Wizard of Oz*, Margaret Hamilton played the Wicked Witch. Known for her enjoyment of playing not-so-attractive characters, Hamilton was more than willing to adorn a prosthetic nose and chin to give the Witch a truly hideous face.

On the other hand, Idina Menzel, the first actress to play Elphaba (most recognized for her roles as Maureen Johnson in *Rent*, Shelby Corcoran on *Glee*, and Nancy Tremaine in *Enchanted*), and the succeeding actresses who play Elphaba in *Wicked*, are simply painted green and left otherwise untouched. Joseph Dulude II, make-up designer for *Wicked*, states, “Elphaba is not supposed to be ugly, she’s supposed to be beautiful. People just hate her because she’s green” (Cote 129).

Whereas MGM’s Witch represented evil and was easily made into an old, haggard woman, *Wicked* producers decided to make Elphaba attractive as a direct visual contrast to the film. By making Elphaba beautiful, it is more believable that she is or can be genuinely good. Similarly, Elphaba’s appearance makes her more human – more like audience members. Viewers seeing Elphaba’s life and uphill battle relate to her and understand her not only for her actions but also because she looks like they do- human, simple, and vulnerable.

Interaction with Others

One aspect of *Wicked* that is most influential in recreating a new understanding of Elphaba is her interaction with several different characters throughout the production’s plotline. When seen through Elphaba’s eyes, audiences see the story of Oz quite differently. Several of the more noteworthy relationships that assist in shaping Elphaba and her personality are with her roommate, Glinda; her father, Frex; her sister, Nessa; love interest, Fiyero; her favorite teacher, Doctor Dillamond; and the Shiz University headmistress, Madame Morrible.

Glinda

The show opens with a group of Ozians singing of the death of Elphaba. They are thrilled that the “wickedest witch there ever was, the enemy of all of us here in Oz, is dead” (“No One Mourns the Wicked”). Glinda, the head of Oz, is questioned about rumors that she and Elphaba were once friends. She confesses that yes, they were, and proceeds to tell the story of her long-lost friend.

Understandably, within a musical, much of the storyline is carried and demonstrated through song, and perhaps the strongest exhibitions of the changing, growing, and challenging relationship that Glinda and Elphaba share can be found in five songs spread throughout the production.

Glinda and Elphaba were college freshman at the same time, and were accidentally registered to be roommates by the University’s headmistress. “What Is This Feeling” is the first glimpse into the young girls’ negative feelings for each other, as both Elphaba and Glinda are writing home to their parents to explain their current predicament. Glinda describes Elphaba as “unusually and exceedingly peculiar and altogether quite impossible to describe,” where Elphaba simply calls Glinda “blonde” to embody her new roommate’s many faults.

The song is filled with petty, unnecessary comments from both girls relaying a certain level of immaturity, insecurity and unwillingness to get past surface level appearances and to the heart of the other. Both girls describe their feelings as “Loathing. Unadulterated loathing. For your face. Your voice. Your clothing. Let’s just say – I loathe it all” (“What Is This Feeling?”). To make matters worse, the entire student body joins in, singing, “poor Glinda forced to reside with something so disgusting... we just want to tell you – we’re all on your side” (“What Is This Feeling?”).

Almost from the start, Elphaba is alone and isolated from anyone who could possibly care for her. There is not a single person in the student body who values her as a friend, and that is difficult for her (not that she isn't used to it). This song, and the feelings therein start this pair off on the wrong foot, and as a result, the girls build walls to keep the other out – until Glinda makes the first step toward changing things.

The next song that clearly shows a progression in Elphaba and Glinda's friendship is called "Popular" and shows Glinda attempting to make Elphaba more like she is. The piece begins with a simple, humorous statement by Glinda, as she assumes that because she wants to be friends, so does Elphaba:

Glinda: Now that we're friends, I've decided to make you my new project.

Elphaba: You really don't have to do that.

Glinda: I know. That's what makes me so nice.

Clearly Glinda doesn't understand that Elphaba does not want or need her attention, but Elphaba chooses to see Glinda's actions as beneficial and selfless, despite the fact that she is embodying qualities that are quite the opposite. Within the song, Glinda sings, "Now that I've chosen to become a pal, a sister, and advisor, there's nobody wiser. Not when it comes to popular" ("Popular").

Within the song, though filled with funny dance moves and witty anecdotes, audiences see a shift in Glinda. While she begins the song willing to make over Elphaba for mostly selfish reasons, by the end of the number, she sees Elphaba for who she truly is as she states, "Why Miss Elphaba – look at you – you're beautiful." In that moment, Glinda opens herself up and shows a more vulnerable side. She is no longer "above" Elphaba and is no longer in control. She sees the beauty in Elphaba that she had chosen to overlook in the past. From this point forward,

Glinda and Elphaba's relationship grows and flourishes into a full-fledged friendship, seen in the number "One Short Day."

As the girl's friendship continues to grow, they plan a day trip to the nearby city of Oz. Enjoying the sights, playing games, and visiting the Wizard are all planned for the day, but the most important lyrics found in the song are those that show the girls are finally willing to open up to each other. They sing, simply, "We're just two friends. Two good friends. Two best friends. Sharing one wonderful, one short day." ("One Short Day")

Unfortunately, things quickly change for the pair. After a meeting with the Wizard and learning of his true schemes, Elphaba refuses to lie, cheat and steal to gain power, while Glinda is willing to forsake all for the favor of Oz. Glinda pleads with Elphaba, singing, "Listen to me. Just say you're sorry. You can still be with the Wizard. All you've worked and waited for. You can have all you ever wanted..." Elphaba, though, in a moment of bravery, understanding that this decision changes everything states, "No. But I don't want it. I can't want it anymore."

In this moment, during the song entitled "Defying Gravity," the two friends have hit a fork in the road and cannot agree on which path is best. Throughout the number, Elphaba sings of the possibilities available if only Glinda will come with her, and Glinda does the same for Elphaba, stating that power and popularity are sometimes worth giving up a worthy cause. In the end, though, it is decided that they will part ways, on good terms, understanding their friendship will never be the same.

The entire second act depicts a battle between Glinda and Elphaba's chosen paths. Glinda has become an elected official. She believes that she is going to marrying the man she loves, Fiyero. She has adoring fans all over the country – and she is still not happy. She regrets her decision to choose fame over friendship, and she worries for Elphaba.

Elphaba, in contrast, is in hiding, running from family, friends, the law, and, in a way, herself. She does not know whom to turn to, how to manage her powers, and how to fix past mistakes. As the show comes to a climax, though, the girls meet one, final time and sing of their lives, their choices, and the fact that, in spite of it all, they are thankful for the other.

I've heard it said that people come into our lives for a reason, bringing something we must learn and we are led to those who help us most to grow, if we let them. And we help them in return. Well, I don't know if I believe that's true, but I know I'm who I am today, because I knew you. ("For Good")

Those are some of the last words these two ever speak to each other, and it is a perfect culmination of the friendship. The two have grown and matured and are finally able to accept the good memories, the struggles, and the lessons that they have taught each other.

Frex and Nessa

Frex is Elphaba's father and he is the Governor of Munchkinland. He is somewhat arrogant, and not well liked, and he is an arguably unfair parent. Frex is a single parent because his wife died during childbirth, delivering Nessa, Elphaba's younger sister. Rather than harboring bitter feelings toward Nessa, though, Frex blames Elphaba for his wife's death, and unfortunately, Elphaba knows that:

My father hates me... It's my fault that my sister is the way she is. You see, when my mother was carrying Nessa, my father was worried that the new baby might come out... green. So he made my mother chew milk flowers, day and night. But that made Nessa come too soon, with her little legs all tangled. And my mother never woke up. None of which ever would have happened if not for me. (Act One, Scene Nine- Sharing Secrets)

Nessa is, without a doubt, Frex's favorite child, and that fact is made clear quickly after the production begins. Audiences learn that Elphaba is older than the average college-aged freshman because her father would not permit her to attend University when she would have normally. Instead, she is only sent to school to care for her sister, who is wheelchair-bound. Nessa is described as "tragically beautiful" by the school's headmistress but has a personality that deters many people from befriending her. Nessa is whiny, and entitled; she expects to be cared for, and as a result, she is often seen treating Elphaba poorly and manipulating her good intentions.

Despite her sister's attitude, Elphaba can be seen taking her position as caretaker quite seriously throughout the production's first act, keeping Nessa close by, and using her powers (unintentionally) whenever someone makes Nessa uncomfortable. In a letter home to her father, Elphaba, despite dealing with a new roommate, a lack of a social circle, struggles with classes, and other stressors states that, in spite of it all, "of course I'll care for Nessa" ("What Is This Feeling?").

Though Elphaba shows a more vulnerable and compassionate side when it comes to Nessa, that sentiment is not returned in the second act, when Nessa has the chance to help protect and possibly save her sister from the newly formed Witch Hunters. Rather than helping, though, Nessa uses pain and frustrations from the past as justification to force Elphaba to fend for herself:

You fly around Oz trying to rescue Animals you've never met, and not once did you ever think to use your powers on me. All my life I've depended on you, how do you think that feels? All of my life I've depended on you and this hideous chair with wheels. (Act Two, Scene Two – Elphaba and Nessa Reunite)

Because she is known as the sister of the Wicked Witch and has such a bitter attitude and ruthless way of ruling as Governor after her father's death, Nessa is deemed the Wicked Witch of the East by her subjects shortly after this scene is complete.

Though the dialogue and musical numbers relating to Frex and Nessa are somewhat sparse, they show that Elphaba has a background and a life before Shiz University. She has people who should know her. She has what should be a support system, a caretaker, and a friend in her father and sister, respectively. And yet, audiences see a distant, cold father, and a somewhat self-righteous, uncaring younger sister, both who abuse, manipulate and mistreat Elphaba.

Fiyero

As most schools do, Shiz University boasts an elite group of individuals who think of themselves as "the popular crowd." Led by Glinda, the Shiz elite essentially run the school, make social rules, and determine who is in the "in crowd" and who is not. Partway through the first act, a student by the name of Fiyero arrives and is welcomed wholeheartedly into the popular crowd, due to his pretty looks, somewhat arrogant approach to life, and a desire to have fun over his education.

Similar to most of the other female students at Shiz University, Elphaba finds herself interested in the new handsome stranger and hopeful for the opportunity to get to know him better. Unfortunately, though, immediately after his arrival, Glinda announces that Fiyero is perfect, she is perfect, and thus, they must be perfect for each other, and Elphaba misses out on her chance for a "perfect" relationship. Rather than understanding that Fiyero is simply shallow, Elphaba is of the opinion that their incompatibility is because she has something wrong with her,

as she sings, “blithe smile, lithe limb, she who’s winsome, she wins him. Gold hair with a gentle curl, that’s the girl he chose, and Heaven knows, I’m not that girl.”

During the first act, Elphaba and Fiyero have a moment of connection, though, when Elphaba attempts to free a small lion cub who is going to be operated on, to turn him from Animal to animal. In her rage, Elphaba inadvertently freezes everyone in the classroom except Fiyero. He helps her to save and free the caged cub. Though their interaction is short, strained, and fairly negative, the moment offers the chance for each to open up to the other. From that moment on, Fiyero begins to better understand not only Elphaba, but also himself, as he sees what it means to truly have a cause and truly fight for something other than popularity.

The second act opens with a surprise engagement party – a surprise for the Ozians, but also for Fiyero – as Glinda announces that she and her perfect partner will soon be wed. Fiyero, though, has other plans, as audiences see him question his past actions, as well as future plans. Eventually, Fiyero, who now works as the Head of the Guards for the Wizard of Oz, runs away from Glinda, and begins his search for Elphaba, who, he now has realized, is the girl who he truly loves. In hopes of keeping up appearances, Fiyero stays in the Emerald City, but sends Elphaba to his family’s vacation home, called Kiamo Ko, or, as most know it from the MGM film, the dark castle where the Wicked Witch dies.

At this point in the production, Dorothy’s house falls on the Wicked Witch of the East, and this disaster briefly brings Elphaba out of hiding. In coming to visit her sister’s final resting place, Elphaba runs into Glinda and Fiyero. Glinda threatens Elphaba, but Fiyero, with his newfound attitude, steps in and is injured badly. Elphaba flees to her safe haven and completes a spell to keep Fiyero alive, to “let his flesh not be torn, let his blood leave no stain, will they beat him? Let him feel no pain. Let his bones never break, and however they try to destroy him, let

him never die, let him never die!” Unbeknownst to Elphaba, though, her spell does not only heal Fiyero’s injuries but also turns him into the Scarecrow.

The rest of the second act follows Elphaba’s reconciliation with Glinda, interaction with Dorothy, and her ultimate demise due to a bucket of water. What audiences see, though, after her death, is that Elphaba has not died at all but has used the rumor of water melting her to her advantage. She has staged her own death, and after the apparent melting, Fiyero comes into the room, knocks on the floor, and Elphaba climbs from a trap door in the floor. The two run away together, thrilled that finally they can be together, alone, without all of Oz watching them.

Doctor Dillamond

Doctor Dillamond is a professor at Shiz University who teaches, among other subjects, history. The important thing to note about Doctor Dillamond is that he is a goat – but he is an Animal – not an animal. In the world of Oz, Animals, with a capital A, are one step above animals, with a lowercase a, because they can walk on their hind legs, eat human’s food, think like humans, and act as regular members of society. Animals can be professors, as Dillamond is, but they can also be politicians, artisans, doctors, or any other vocation they choose. Other Animals mentioned in *Wicked* include an Ox, who is a professor at a sister school, and an Owl, who is a local vicar.

As the story of *Oz* begins to unfold, audiences learn that even though Animals have been treated well for centuries, a new political movement, utilizing the slogan “Animals Should Be Seen, Not Heard” is growing in popularity and threatening the livelihoods of Animals all over the country. Doctor Dillamond, like many others, is scared for his future, his rights, and the possibility of being converted to an animal and losing his ability to speak, think, and live the life he’s always known.

It is through Doctor Dillamond that Elphaba finds that “under the surface, behind the scenes, something bad” is happening throughout Oz (“Something Bad”). Dillamond describes friends and fellow Animals that are disappearing or losing their ability to speak, and Elphaba, believing that it is the only logical thing to do, schedules a time to speak with the Wizard about what is happening.

Because of his insecurity and status as an outsider, and Elphaba’s similar situation among her peers, Doctor Dillamond and Elphaba become fast friends at Shiz. Elphaba excels in Dillamond’s class, and they frequently eat lunch together, discussing politics, the anti-Animal movement, and Elphaba’s experiences in classes at Shiz. The two understand each other’s place in life and can comfort each other and hope that the future may not truly be as bleak as it appears in the present.

Madame Morrible

Though Madame Morrible plays a comparatively small part in the production, her few actions are some of the most influential to Elphaba’s journey from awkward student to hated political figure. Madame Morrible is first introduced as the Headmistress of Shiz University, where Elphaba is enrolled in school. Rather pompous and arrogant, she teaches wizardry classes but only to those she deems worthy. After Elphaba accidentally practices magic in Madame Morrible’s presence, she becomes the one and only selected pupil of Morrible. It is also discovered in passing that Madame Morrible has the power to influence the weather and can create storms, or, as later discovered in the production, tornadoes.

After several weeks of private tutoring, Madame Morrible arranges a meeting between Elphaba and the Wizard of Oz, claiming that he has been long searching for someone with powers like Elphaba’s. Upon her arrival to the Emerald City and the Wizard’s workshop, though,

it is also discovered that Madame Morrible has been recently given the position of press secretary to the Wizard of Oz. It is this position, and her ability to abuse her political, social, and societal power that allowed Morrible to destroy, almost singlehandedly, Elphaba's good name after she declines using her magic for the Wizard's twisted schemes. Morrible spreads lies and raises Glinda higher on her pedestal and further tears down Elphaba:

The day you (Glinda) were first summoned to an audience with Oz, and although he would not tell you why initially, when you bowed before his throne, he decreed you'd hence be known as Glinda the Good – officially! Then with a jealous squeal the Wicked Witch burst from concealment where she had been lurking ... (“Thank Goodness”)

There is a second lie that Madame Morrible circulates, stating that Elphaba is actively searching for people to injure and destroy. The citizens of Oz frequently repeat this particular falsehood, which only adds to the overall fear in Oz:

Every day more wicked! Every day the terror grows! All of Oz is ever on alert. That's the way with the Wicked – spread fear where e'er she goes, seeking out new victims she can hurt! Like some terrible green blizzard throughout the land she flies, defaming our poor Wizard with her calumnies and lies! (“Thank Goodness”)

In an attempt to lure Elphaba into a trap, it is Morrible's powers that create the tornado that brings Dorothy's house crashing into Oz and onto Nessa, the Wicked Witch of the East. The trap works, but thanks to a compassionate act of Fiyero, Elphaba gets away. That does not end Morrible's terror though, as she leads a group of Witch Hunters, in hopes of finding and killing Elphaba. Finally recognizing the damage that she has done, Glinda comes to Elphaba's aid. After

the supposed melting of her friend, Glinda finally flexes the power she has in Oz as a favored political icon and puts Morrible in jail for her lies, crimes, and lifelong manipulation and torture of Elphaba.

With the various facets of the show now described, Elphaba's journey through the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, including each of the three steps, will now be described individually, beginning with guilt, continuing to mortification, considering both mortification and scapegoating, and ending with the redemption that Elphaba receives in the show.

Guilt

Elphaba's Mother, Melena

When the show opens, audiences see that Elphaba is being forced to handle criticism from not only her peers, but also her own father, Frex and sister, Nessa. Though it is unclear why her own family harbors such negativity against her, it is hard to miss that something is not right within their family dynamic. Frex is cold, and almost completely ignores Elphaba – only speaking to her when required, and focused on her duty to care for her little sister. Frex is only sending Elphaba to school in order to care and protect Nessa, and gives no parting gift to Elphaba, but gifts a beautiful pair of slippers to Nessa upon his departure. It is clear the Elphaba blames herself for her father's actions, and her sister's attitude, but it is not until about halfway through the first act, that Elphaba explains everything, and offers perhaps the most upsetting source of guilt she faces.

Elphaba has green skin. That is evident to all. But what is not clear is why she has that green skin. More importantly, though, is that her father and mother also did not know the cause of their first daughter's condition, and as a result, acted rather dangerously throughout their second pregnancy. Elphaba describes that it's her fault that her sister is disabled (she is

wheelchair bound), and that her mother is dead:

It's my fault that my sister is the way she is. You see, when my mother was carrying Nessa, my father was worried that the new baby might come out... green. So he made my mother chew milk flowers, day and night. But that made Nessa come too soon, with her little legs all tangled. And my mother never woke up. None of which ever would have happened if not for me. (Act One, Scene Nine – Sharing Secrets)

Obviously Frex and his wife succeeded in keeping their daughter from being green, but at a cost that they did not foresee – Nessa is born early and disabled, and Elphaba's mother, Melena never wakes up. Frex is unable to rejoice in his success in keeping Nessa's skin a 'normal' color, as his wife is gone and his new daughter is doomed to a life comparatively difficult to Elphaba's. He is in need of a person to blame, and chooses Elphaba. Rather than owning his mistake, Frex runs from the truth, denies his part in the situation, and alienates his daughter, who, in all actuality, had nothing to do with, and would probably prefer that, her green skin, Nessa's disability, and Melena's death had never happened.

Despite her roommate, Glinda's, best efforts to convince Elphaba that it was "the milkflowers fault, not [Elphaba's]," it is so engrained in Elphaba's psyche, after years of being told from her father and sister that she caused her sister's disabilities and mother's death, that she has learned to truly accept and believe the same.

Family, to many, symbolizes the ultimate place of safety and comfort. Unfortunately, though, Elphaba does not have a place of security to call home. Instead, she, essentially from birth is berated with blame, guilt, hatred, and lies from her father. Nessa, desiring to please her pained father and fill the position of most beloved child adopts her father's attitude, bitterness,

and distance from her sister.

Elphaba's rocky and somewhat inconsistent childhood and upbringing leads to an inability to learn trust, forgiveness, and compassion from those around her. This ultimately causes Elphaba to see the world through a very distorted lens. Robbed of any place to feel safe, secure, and appreciated, Elphaba becomes hyper sensitive to her condition, bitter toward most people, including herself, and builds walls so that nobody can get to know her. Unfortunately, this is not the only example of guilt that Elphaba is forced to deal with, as many different individuals around her add to her stress, both intentionally and accidentally, and she has no foundation of security in which to draw from.

Glinda

Glinda, simply stated, is spoiled. She is used to getting, without question, everything she asks for, and brings that attitude to school with her. She has her heart set on becoming a witch, and is planning on impressing Madame Morrible as a way to gain access to Morrible's illusive sorcery class:

Yes, you see, I'm [Glinda] Upland of the Upperuplands... I've applied to your sorcery seminar, and indeed that is my sole purpose of attending Shiz; to study sorcery with you. Perhaps you recall my essay, "Magic Wands, Need They Have A Point." (Act One, Scene Two – Dear Old Shiz)

Unfortunately, though, when Elphaba arrives at school and accidentally casts a spell on her sister's wheelchair, Madame Morrible states that she will accept Elphaba and no one else into the semester's sorcery class. Despite her best efforts to get Morrible's attention and affection, Glinda is left without the first and perhaps most important thing she came to school for – a knowledge of sorcery.

Naturally, Glinda feels that she must find someone to blame for her missing an opportunity she feels she deserves, and the easy target is her new roommate, Elphaba. Even as Glinda's target, Elphaba feels badly about being in the sorcery course and eliminating that option for Glinda. Though she never desired to be a Witch, she is smart enough to understand its importance to the others in her class who hope to claim that title.

Later in the production, audiences see Elphaba make a deal with Morrible. Morrible drops in uninvited to Glinda's room and presents her with a small training wand. When Glinda asks, "how can I ever express my graditition⁹?" Morrible states that Elphaba requested Glinda's inclusion in the sorcery class, and even insisted that Glinda be told immediately, or Elphaba would quit the seminar entirely.

It is small acts of kindness such as these that show that Elphaba still cares deeply for those around her despite their negativity between them. Unfortunately, this guilt-causing situation ends in a positive light, with Elphaba able to patch the bitterness and guilt, but that, unfortunately, does not always occur, and positive resolutions are not guaranteed.

The second clear example of guilt that Elphaba feels in relation to Glinda is in her relationship with Fiyero. Soon after his arrival at Shiz University, Fiyero becomes enthralled by Glinda's bubbly personality and pretty looks. The two become the 'it couple' of Shiz, which really hurts Elphaba's self-esteem, as she (like most female students at Shiz) is interested in Fiyero:

Don't dream too far. Don't lose sight of who you are. Don't remember that rush of joy. He could be that boy... I'm not that girl. Ev'ry so often we long to steal to the land of what-might-have-been. But that doesn't soften the ache we feel when

⁹ In the Land of Oz, many words are pronounced differently, or receive extra syllables. This word, for example is gratitude.

reality sets back in. (“I’m Not That Girl”)

Because of their shallow perspective on life and lack of emotional depth, Fiyero and Glinda become the perfect pair – until Fiyero sees Elphaba’s passion and desire to help the cause of the Animals. In reflecting on Elphaba’s desire to be more than just a student, Fiyero is inspired to be more, too, and thus realizes that Glinda is simply a pretty face and nothing more.

The second act shows Elphaba and Fiyero spending more time together, and eventually falling in love. For a while, Fiyero and Elphaba are able to keep their love of each other and the hopes and dreams they have for the future a secret. In time, though, Glinda overhears enough conversation and sees enough interaction to figure out that Fiyero’s loyalties have changed, and she sings, “don’t wish, don’t start. Wishing only wounds the heart. There’s a girl I know. He loves her so. I’m not that girl.” (“I’m Not That Girl Reprise”)

Though Elphaba is in love and greatly appreciates the affections and attentions from Fiyero, she still feels badly, as she considers her new relationship as a sort of betrayal to Glinda. This gives Elphaba a great feeling of guilt for disloyalty to her only real friend in Oz.

Though other characters throughout the production make Elphaba feel guilty for her actions, Glinda also causes Elphaba to feel a completely different type of guilt. Thanks to Glinda, not only does Elphaba feel guilt for specific *actions* or situations, but also guilt for simply being Elphaba.

In the first act, Glinda sings one of the show’s most well-known songs, “Popular.” The song is essentially a monologue by Glinda, stating all the things wrong with Elphaba, the implications for those shortcomings, and that Elphaba needs to be more like Glinda – or more popular:

Whenever I see someone less fortunate than I, and let’s face it, who isn’t less

fortunate than I? My tender heart tends to start to bleed, and when someone needs a makeover, I simply have to take over! I know, I know exactly what they need. And even in your case, though it's the toughest case I've yet to face, don't worry, I'm determined to succeed! Follow my lead, and yes indeed, you will be popular!
 ("Popular")

Glinda dissects Elphaba's posture, attire, attitude, friends, shoes, personality, and intelligence – stating, in all categories, Elphaba would be smart to begin emulating Glinda.

This song is the first time that shows Elphaba's true vulnerability. Up to this point in the production, she has remained strong-willed, and showed very little emotion other than anger or bitterness. The song "Popular" causes Elphaba to question herself, and wonder if things really would be different if she were more like Glinda. There is a distinct disconnect between her mind and her heart, as she must fight between staying true to herself and allowing Glinda to turn her into someone she is not.

Later in the production, Elphaba's attire does change subtly, as she loses her boxy sweater, and show off her arms more. She also takes off her hat, and her hairstyle changes. Though small, these simple costuming changes show guilt. She did not like who she was, so she allowed herself to be changed by Glinda in hopes of relieving the stress of her past. Ultimately, she doubts herself, sees her differences, and once again feels guilty for her appearance and her inability to ever be what she thinks those around her are expecting.

Though the show does begin with Elphaba's peers pressuring and teasing her, it becomes an internal fear that causes Elphaba to struggle with new relationships later in the production. In a sense, Elphaba projects her expectations for herself onto others, and therefore feels guilty for not meeting their standards – despite the fact that they have none. Again, her guilt is caused by

her attempts at Mortification, and Elphaba can again be described as her own worst enemy.

Animals and animals

Early on in the production, Elphaba befriends her History professor at Shiz University. Her professor goes by the name of Doctor Dillamond and he is an Animal – able to speak, think, and function in society just as any human would. Dillamond shares that something is happening in Oz that all should be mindful of, and all Animals are worried about. According to Dillamond, Animals are losing their ability to think and speak, and are even being caged.

Rumors flying around Oz suggest that numerous Animals, including a local Owl vicar and Ox professor have been forbidden to preach, teach, and can now only “screech.” (*Something Bad*) Elphaba finds it hard to “imagine a world where Animals are kept in cages and they never speak,” but Doctor Dillamond convinces her that someone must take this concern to the Wizard. After all, “that’s why [they] have a Wizard – so nothing bad” can happen in Oz.

Soon after this discussion with Elphaba, Doctor Dillamond is mysteriously fired from Shiz University without any real reason or explanation offered to the students. What is worse, though, is that when Elphaba goes to say her final goodbyes, Dillamond is unable to do anything other than bleat. Elphaba realizes that he doesn’t understand a word she is saying. He has been changed from Animal to animal and Elphaba, in part, blames herself for not doing something sooner.

The second example of guilt caused by Animals is found when Elphaba finally does gain an audience with the Wizard. In his palace, the Wizard shows Elphaba several monkeys that he keeps as pets. They are animals, and, he claims, always have been. The Wizard states that Chistery, the ‘head monkey’ “looks ... longingly at the birds every morning...” and wishes that someone, possibly Elphaba could offer Chistery the ability to fly by casting a levitation spell.

Elphaba obliges, believing that Chistery will simply gain the ability to rise from the floor, but instead, is horrified to see the poor monkey sprout wings.

Chistery is in pain and scared, but when Elphaba screams that she must reverse the spell to help Chistery, the Wizard states plainly that all spells are irreversible and Chistery will always be this way now. From this fiasco, Elphaba feels even more guilt. First, she missed an opportunity to save Doctor Dillamond, and now she has actually been the cause of animal abuse and suffering. Whereas she was once a bystander, she is now the sole cause of an animal's struggle¹⁰.

Backfiring Magic

Elphaba, as far as the audience can understand, is the only individual in Oz who has the magical abilities that she does. This is another source of guilt that seems to have weighed heavily on Elphaba's heart long before the storyline of *Wicked* ever began.

Upon her arrival at Shiz University, Elphaba finds out that there has been an error in the housing assignments, leaving she and her sister in differing rooms. When Madame Morrible attempts to wheel Nessa to her new room, Elphaba panics, feeling responsible for her sister's well-being, and inadvertently casts a spell to bring Nessa's chair wheeling back across the stage on its own. Though Nessa is flustered and obviously angered, Madame Morrible states simply, "never apologize for talent. Talent is a gift. Have you ever considered a career in sorcery? ... I shall tutor you myself, and take no other students."

Madame Morrible states early on in the production that she has been waiting for years to find someone with a "talent" like Elphaba's. Unfortunately, though, Elphaba has convinced

¹⁰ Feeling that she owes something to Chistery, as well as the rest of the newly created 'Flying Monkeys,' Elphaba invites them to stay with her, where she promises to care for them in retribution, and they accept. This explains the Flying Monkeys seen in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's *The Wizard of Oz* film

herself that her magical ability is nothing more than a quirk that she needs to “suppress or hide” from the world. (*The Wizard and I*)

Though she accepts Morrible’s offer to take sorcery lessons, and ultimately does very well, magic is never something that Elphaba truly appreciates. Elphaba sees her life in a glass half empty approach, refusing to believe that magic could save lives, allow her to fight for a worthy cause, or live a full, worthy life. Elphaba only sees magic that hurts her friends, creates numerous dangerous situations and puts her in the position she is in, having to run from the majority of Oz inhabitants.

There are four instances in particular of Elphaba using her magic to help those she cares about, and it backfiring. In her attempts to save Chistery, Lion, Boq and Fiyero, Elphaba’s spell does not do what she expects it to, and though Elphaba tries hard to use her magic for the better, the outcome of her spells frequently do not exhibit her intentions. Again, her hope of Mortification leads to more stress.

When she visits the Wizard, it is Elphaba’s hope that in interacting with and practicing magic on the animals he has in the palace, she will be able to find and fix the cause of the Animal/animal dilemma in Oz. Chistery is the head monkey at the Wizard of Oz’s palace, and is said to love birds for their ability to fly. When she first meets with the Wizard, Elphaba is tricked into casting a levitation spell on Chistery.

With the best of intentions, and seeking purification for Doctor Dillamond’s newly discovered inability to speak, Elphaba hopes that casting this levitation spell will allow the Wizard to better understand and ultimately fix the problem of Animals losing their ability to think and speak. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Elphaba, the Wizard has no intention of fixing the problem, as he is the cause. Elphaba casts the levitation spell, resulting in Chistery’s

sprouting wings. In seeking her purification, Elphaba has caused Chistery deep fear and immense pain.

Lion, as would be suspected, is the Cowardly Lion portrayed in the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. After Doctor Dillamond is carried away, deemed unable to perform his professorial duties, Madame Morrible takes over his class. The first class meeting, she brings in a small lion cub, and shares that they will be using him for experimentation. Though she claims it is for his betterment, Elphaba knows she is lying and sees a great opportunity to help an Animal. Elphaba (accidentally) casts a spell on the entire class, takes the cub out into the woods, and releases him into freedom.

This act is simple, but profound to Elphaba, as she sees the genuine good that can come from protecting others. With her conscience clear, Elphaba goes home believing that she has done a good thing. She discovers later, though, that the cub is now “cowardly” because he was not able to “fight his own battles” as a cub to gain necessary courage. (*Hunt of the Witch Hunters*) Again, Elphaba’s act of purification and good intention left her with shame.

Boq¹¹ is another secondary character that, though playing a small role comparatively, impacts not only the storyline of *Wicked* but makes a distinct connection to Metro-Goldwyn Mayer’s *The Wizard of Oz* film and Broadway production. Boq is a Munchkin from Munchkinland that is attending University with Elphaba and Glinda, and has fallen madly in love with Glinda, despite her best efforts to deter his affections. In an attempt to stop Boq’s tireless attention, Glinda convinces him to ask out Nessa to a school dance, but tricks him into thinking he’s doing her a huge favor:

¹¹ The name Boq is another nod to L. Frank Baum’s original text. The very first Munchkin that Dorothy meets along the yellow brick road, who provides supper and a place to stay for a night, is named Boq.

Oh – that’s so kind. But you know what would be even kinder? See that tragically beautiful girl, the one in the chair? It seems to unfair we should go on a spree and not she. Gee, I know someone would be my hero, if that someone were to go invite her. (“Dancing Through Life”)

It is implied that for the remainder of their days at Shiz, Boq and Nessa are in a relationship, Nessa happily believing that Boq’s intentions are pure, and Boq bitter that he did as Glinda asked, and is now stuck. Boq is also, in many ways, forced to work as Nessa’s caretaker (or, slave) as she is in her wheelchair.

In the second act, Elphaba visits her sister while on the run, and casts a spell on Nessa to help her walk. Boq sees this as an opportunity to leave Nessa, who no longer needs his assistance, and finally win over Glinda. Nessa, in a fit of rage tries to cast a spell on Boq, claiming that, if he doesn’t love her, she can’t allow him to love anyone. Nessa is not gifted in magic as Elphaba is, however, and her spell shrinks Boq’s heart and comes close to killing him.

In an attempt to save his life, Elphaba casts a counter spell, turning him into a creature that doesn’t need a heart to survive: the Tin Man. When he wakes up, all that Boq remembers is Elphaba’s chanting, not Nessa’s curse, and he blames Elphaba, claiming she, out of anger and frustration, turned him into what he is for no reason other than to spite him. Nessa, still bitter with both her sister and Boq’s lack of affection, allows this story to spread, never aiding her sister, and thus Boq becomes another source of guilt for Elphaba throughout the second act of the production.

The final straw for Elphaba is when she injures (or believes she has injured) Fiyero, the man she finally realizes she loves. By the second act of the show, Fiyero has worked his way up to the post of Head Witch Hunter. He uses his position to gain valuable information that he uses

to protect Elphaba.

Shortly after Madame Morrible has brought the house crashing into Oz, Elphaba, Glinda and Fiyero all run into each other, and Glinda threatens to take Elphaba to the Wizard. When the Witch Hunters arrive, Fiyero sacrifices himself, allowing Elphaba just enough time to run away and avoid capture. Unfortunately, Fiyero is now recognized as a traitor, and is treated as such, taken to the Wizard's palace and tortured for Elphaba's whereabouts.

The knowledge that Fiyero is being tortured on her behalf bothers Elphaba tremendously, and causes her the most guilt that audiences have seen up to this point in the show's plot. Doing all the she knows how to do, Elphaba casts a spell, singing "What good is this chanting, I don't even know what I'm reading! I don't even know what trick I ought to try. Fiyero, where are you? Already dead or bleeding, one more disaster I can add to my generous supply?" ("No Good Deed")

In the musical number "No Good Deed" sung by Elphaba near the end of the show, audiences see the severe doubt and worry that Elphaba feels in relation to these four mishaps:

No good deed goes unpunished, no act of charity goes unresented, no good deed goes unpunished, that's my new creed... Sure I meant well, well look at what well-meant did. Alright, enough, so be it – so be it then: Let all Oz know I'm wicked through and through. ("No Good Deed")

It is the very thing that makes her special that drives her to wickedness. Elphaba is angry that her "gift" has hurt so many, and she no longer desires to use it for good. Instead, Elphaba decides that if all want to believe she is so evil, she might as well act the part and use her magic for bad. Though Elphaba has numerous situations that cause pain, struggle, and guilt, there is a happy ending at the end of *Wicked*, that brings Elphaba redemption and freedom from the

difficult life she has been living up to this point.

Purification

Within Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle, there are two differing forms of purification. The first, mortification is described as a way to put the betterment of many over the betterment of self. In many cases, this is taken a step further, as a person makes a victim out of himself or herself in order to further the community, family, country or other larger group. The alternative form of purification is scapegoating and requires the person feeling guilt to push emotion and pain onto another, instead of owning and dealing with their problem. Elphaba's use of both forms of purification will be discussed, along with specific examples.

Mortification

Overall, Elphaba chooses to practice mortification to alleviate her feelings of guilt. Throughout the production, audiences view Elphaba's taking on severe guilt for many things that are not her doing or have nothing to do with her. Elphaba's low self-esteem is a result of a rocky upbringing and a lack of affection, and this causes her to accept all guilt willingly, even when she should not.

Frex and Nessa's Standards

The first example of purification that Elphaba seeks is seen in the broken relationship she shares in her father, Frex, and her sister, Nessa. Because of her father's bitterness over his wife's death, Nessa's disability, and the overall atmosphere of resentment in Elphaba's home, she feels that a simple way to regain affection is by being "enough" to those around her.

Throughout the production, Elphaba can be seen working to live up to the standards that her father and sister have set before her. She is trying to be the perfect daughter and the perfect sister. The difficult piece of this puzzle is the fact that audiences, and most likely Elphaba

herself, know that nothing she does will ever break the familial barriers she faces.

Elphaba's relationship with her father is similar to the one she has with her sister. Though he is only on stage for several minutes of the entire production, audiences are not likely to forget Frex, Elphaba's father. He speaks harshly to his eldest daughter, maintains quite a distance from her and belittles her in front of her peers, reminding her that she is only in school to care for Nessa. Frex makes it clear he does not love or care for Elphaba, and just as can be seen in her relationship with her sister, Elphaba tries desperately to impress her father.

Numerous times throughout the show, Elphaba can be seen protecting, providing for, caring about, and guiding her sister. Without question she comes to Nessa whenever called and allows her sister to mock her and lash out as a way to handle stress. Elphaba is, in many ways, Nessa's punching bag, and every time her feelings are hurt or she is blamed, she tries harder and harder to be perfect and to live up to her sister's impossible demands.

In being the perfect sister to Nessa and the perfect daughter to Frex, Elphaba is seeking purification from the sins her family has unfairly placed solely on her shoulders. She is genuinely empathetic to their situations and is seeking purification for her mother's death, her father's pain, and her sister's life in a wheelchair.

Glinda's 'Help'

The second example of Elphaba's mortification is her acceptance of Glinda's 'help' in becoming popular. Elphaba sees a bubbly, outgoing, overall façade of happiness in Glinda, and desperately wants to feel that way too. Throughout the first act, audiences see slight, but noticeable, changes in Elphaba's attire and demeanor. Elphaba no longer wears a sweater, exposing her arms and more of her previously well-hidden green skin. Elphaba also stops wearing her beanie-styled hat, in some scenes is seen without her glasses, and has a change of

posture as she attempts to appear more confident.

Elphaba also spends more and more time with Glinda, Fiyero, and their friends, and it can be said that she picks up some of their social habits. While this is occurring, audiences can still see Elphaba trying to remain true to herself. Whereas her new cohorts are somewhat lackadaisical in their studies, Elphaba studies diligently and remains intentional about growing closer with her professor, Doctor Dillamond. Elphaba is also an excellent student in her sorcery class, impressing Madame Morrible and earning her a status high enough to see the Wizard.

Another difference between Elphaba and her new friends is that though she is now spending time with popular students, she never puts down others and never attempts to gain from her peer's lack of beauty, fashion, grades, or other perceived shortcomings.

This juxtaposition between becoming popular, and accepting herself enough not to change too drastically is a constant fight for Elphaba. Purification comes in small pieces as Elphaba is no longer seen as an awkward, social outcast with green skin, but a welcomed member of her University peers. She is able to step away from old insecurities and into an almost educational education experience.

Animals and animals

Elphaba, as usual, internalizes the pain of those around her. Doctor Dillamond, her favorite professor, who also happens to be an Animal, is sacked at the end of act one. This action of Ozian government deeply concerns Elphaba, and because of her close ties to Dillamond, she believes that if she had gone to the Wizard sooner, spoken up faster, been more convincing, or had different magical abilities, she could have done more to help her lost professor. After this disappointment, Elphaba feels more convicted to use her abilities for the betterment of Animals in Oz.

At the end of the first act, Elphaba realizes the truth that the Wizard is behind the torture of Animals in Oz . Whereas Glinda is willing to forego her morals in order to gain popularity and prestige in Oz, Elphaba is not and instead chooses to defend those who are unable to defend themselves. Elphaba believes that in working with Animals, protecting them where possible, and offering them a better life, she will gain purification for the guilt she feels over Doctor Dillamond's situation.

Throughout her time working with and for the Animals, Elphaba becomes deeply proud of her work and her ability to help others. Her cause defines her, and she is purified because of that. She, in a sense, is able to accept the rumors and propaganda as a necessary evil, because she is, after all, helping a worthy cause. To her, the beliefs and opinions of Animals, not Ozians, are what matters. Becoming an activist for the Animals allows Elphaba to gain a certain level of purification, as she is able to accept her own beliefs and situation in life.

Throughout the production, audiences never actually see Elphaba's actions in relation to saving the Animals around her. Never on-stage do viewers see Elphaba using her powers for Animal betterment; instead, these actions are alluded to numerous times. Several times within the story's script, characters, including Fiyero, Nessa, and Elphaba herself, mention her willingness and desire to support Animals in their endeavors to save their status in society.

In order to fully support the cause, Elphaba saves many, and provides a safe haven for, numerous Animals and animals. A clear example of this provision of safety can be found in the flying monkeys living with Elphaba. Another way that Elphaba attempts her own mortification and desire to help Animals and animals is in her speaking out against the Wizard and destroying propaganda that he posts and shares throughout the country of Oz.

Despite the fact that she is still feared by most of Oz, unable to show her face in public, and is wanted for crimes she never committed, Elphaba is able to gain a certain level of purification in her own eyes, as she feels she is owning and working to rectify a problem that she sees and believes is worth fixing.

Magic

After being told for the majority of her life that her magical abilities were a curse, something to be ashamed of, and something to be hidden from everyone, Elphaba is finally told at school that she should be proud of her unique abilities. The headmistress at Shiz University, Madame Morrible, after seeing Elphaba cast a spell on her sister's wheelchair, accepts Elphaba and no one else into her Sorcery Seminar and promises to help Elphaba develop and appreciate her special talents. Though she once hated the very thing that made her special, she learns after Madame Morrible's prompting to see her unique talent as a possible blessing in the future.

It is Madame Morrible's idea to visit the Wizard, suggesting that because of Elphaba's special abilities, the Wizard may want Elphaba to work for him. Shortly after she agrees to see the Wizard, Elphaba learns of the injustices being done to Animals, and believes that her abilities will be useful not only for a job with the Wizard, but to help others, especially the Animals in Oz. She believes that in working closely with the man in charge of Oz's government and society, Elphaba will have the perfect platform and opportunity to use her magic for the betterment of those around her. Unfortunately, the Wizard has other plans and tricks Elphaba into causing pain to an Animal – a monkey named Chistery. This accidental harm of a defenseless Animal causes Elphaba to return to the dark place of believing she should be ashamed of her magic.

In time, though, and even after her misfortunes with the Wizard, Elphaba is seen finally adopting and learning to love her magic, and she is seen, again, trying to use her powers for the

betterment of those around her.

Throughout the show, Elphaba attempts many times to help those around her with the best she feels she can offer: her magic. Elphaba believes that despite her past actions, and inability to appreciate her powers, she will gain mortification through her magical good deeds. In each situation that she deems necessary, Elphaba attempts magic as a way to help those that cannot help themselves, to provide in a way that nobody else can, and to relieve the guilt that she feels for not being able to do more. Even in her attempts to help those around her, she feels inadequate, because she cannot make the evil go away completely.

Chistery, the flying monkey created by Elphaba's accidental magic spell, is only the first in a line of many magical slip-ups. In an attempt to save her friends, and loved ones, Elphaba inadvertently changes those around her, and by the end of *Wicked's* story, audiences see that the characters of the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion and are all direct results of Elphaba's spells.

Scapegoating

Throughout the *Wicked* production, audiences see numerous actions that constitute Elphaba's mortification, but not once do they see her using a scapegoat. Almost to a fault, Elphaba internalizes each and every situation, experience, and emotion that could lead her to feel hurt.

In the case of her father and sister's bitterness, Elphaba truly learns to believe that she killed her mother. Similarly, at no fault of her own, she has magical powers that she does not want, and those powers cause her to hurt those around her, even when she has the purest intentions and desire to help. Due to the political turmoil in Oz, with Animals and animals losing their rights and living, Elphaba feels that she alone is to blame, as she was unable to speak out

quick enough, or stand up to the Wizard's evil schemes.

Elphaba, in every sense, sacrifices herself in order to keep the peace, feeling that things are only unsteady because of her. She chooses to forfeit her own happiness, popularity, and love from others, all for the sake of fixing her guilt on her own.

Unfortunately for Elphaba, many of the actions that cause her guilt are the very ones that she believes will bring her purification and freedom. In many situations, audiences see Elphaba making a somewhat informed decision, expecting one outcome and receiving an entirely different one. Because of this disconnect, many of Elphaba's actions seeking mortification lead to more guilt.

Redemption

Whereas Burke suggests that many individuals are never able to wholly reach the third phase of his three-step cycle, Elphaba is blessed to gain redemption, both with herself and with those around her. Elphaba is able to gain self-redemption in two distinct places in *Wicked's* plot, and eventually gains redemption with her long-lost best friend, Glinda, too.

Self-Redemption

Defying Gravity

This song that closes out the first act of *Wicked*, is another one of the show's more popular musical numbers. This song is sung after Elphaba's spell on Chistery has backfired, after the Wizard has expressed his intentions for Animals, and after Elphaba has denied him and fled.

Glinda, the always shallow friend sings that Elphaba should have "stayed calm for once, instead of flying off the handle." ("Defying Gravity") She bitterly sings that she hopes Elphaba is happy now that she has "hurt [her] cause forever." ("Defying Gravity") Despite Glinda's

prodding, Elphaba sees this as her proverbial fork in the road, and chooses the path that she feels more worthwhile, and stays true to her morals:

Something has changed within me, something is not the same. I'm through with playing by the rules of someone else's game. Too late for second-guessing. Too late to go back to sleep. It's time to trust my instincts, close my eyes, and leap...
 ("Defying Gravity")

Eventually, through this song, audiences see Elphaba learn a new acceptance of herself in her pursuit of her beliefs. No longer is Elphaba allowing herself to be defined by her father, her sister, Glinda's desire to be popular, Madame Morrible or the Wizard's wicked intent. In this moment, Elphaba decides that she, and only she, will be in control of her actions, her beliefs, and ultimately the magic that she possesses.

Though this song symbolizes Elphaba's acceptance of herself, it does not signify the end of her fear of society's expectations. Though Elphaba is fully aware of the fact that she is doing the right thing, that does not make the wanted posters, gawking citizens, and rumors any less painful. The second piece of Elphaba's self-redemption does not come until the finale of the production, and the apparent end of her life, as she melts, and escapes from the citizens of Oz, Morrible's propaganda, and the pain that is left in Oz.

"I'm Melting! I'm Melting!"

Perhaps one of the most well-known scenes of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's 1939 film is the Witch melting. Most Americans today, of any age, know the phrase "I'm Melting, I'm Melting," and the writers of *Wicked* decided to take its popularity and make it a pivotal scene in their production, as well.

At the end of the second act, audiences see Elphaba locked in the top tower of a castle, Kiamo Ko, and yelling off stage at a crying girl:

Oh, for Oz's sake, stop crying!!! I can't listen to it anymore! Oh, you want to see your Aunt Em and your Uncle What's-his-name again?! Then get those shoes off your feet! Little brat... takes a dead woman's shoes; must have been raised in a barn! (Act Two, Scene Eleven – March of the Witch Hunters)

Glinda arrives, and the two women share their final words together. Elphaba says that Glinda must not be seen in the castle, and tells her to hide behind a nearby curtain. Glinda pulls the curtain across the entire stage, creating the feeling that the audience is also hiding from the Witch Hunters. The only thing that viewers see are moving shadows as a small girl runs onstage and sloshes water onto the Witch. Elphaba begins screaming that she is melting, and then there is silence.

Glinda gingerly pulls back the curtain and find a puddle of water, and Elphaba's hat on the floor. Elphaba is dead – or is she? After Glinda has departed, audiences hear someone coming. Fiyero, now turned into the Scarecrow runs on stage and taps on a trap door. He exclaims that their plan has worked, but they must leave and never again return to Oz. No person may know who they are, where they have gone, or that Elphaba is, in fact, very much alive.

At the closing of the show, as Elphaba runs away with Fiyero, she receives her ultimate self-redemption. She is now free to live without fear of taunting, shame or abuse. She has the man she loves with her, and she is moving away to a new place that does not know of her title as a Wicked Witch. She receives a new beginning, and with that fresh start, Elphaba is able to finally accept herself – all of herself.

Redemption with Others in Oz

In the end of the *Wicked* production, Elphaba not only discovers a self-acceptance that she has never known, she also has the opportunity redeem herself in the eyes of her only real friend, Glinda.

Elphaba's final visitor before her 'death' is none other than the same individual who (arguably) single handedly put Elphaba in the position she is currently in. Glinda arrives in the castle, pleading with Elphaba to flee once again to a safer place:

Elphaba: You must leave.

Glinda: No! Elphie, I'll tell them everything.

Elphaba: No! They'll only turn against you.

Glinda: I don't care!

Elphaba: But I do! Promise me. Promise me you won't try to clear my name...
promise.

Glinda: Alright. I promise. But I don't understand.

To Elphaba, the Ozians don't matter. Their knowledge of the truth will not change a thing. She has been given the opportunity to fix her relationship with Glinda, and with Fiyero, and for her - that is sufficient.

Glinda and Elphaba share their final words of encouragement, support, and love. Both women understand now that their lives could have been different, but that the what could have been is no longer important. Both women are thankful for the other and for the lessons that were learned and shared:

And just to clear the air, I ask forgiveness for the things I've done that you blame me for. But then I guess we know there's blame to share, and none of it seems to

matter anymore... Who can say if I've been changed for the better? I do believe I have been changed for the better. And because I knew you, I have been changed for good. ("For Good")

After seeing her friend make the ultimate sacrifice, in dying for her cause, something new is lit inside of Glinda. She begins to make immediate changes in Oz using the power given to her by Madame Morrible. Glinda immediately returns to the Wizard's palace and demands two things, first of the Wizard, and second for Morrible, respectively:

I want you to leave Oz. I'll make the pronouncement myself: that the strains of Wizardship have been too much for you and you are taking an indefinite leave of absence! You'd better go get your balloon ready! ... Madame, have you ever considered how you'd fare in captivity? Personally, I don't think you'll hold up very well. My professional opinion is that you do not have what it takes. I hope you prove me wrong. I doubt you will¹². (Act Two, Scene Thirteen – Elphaba's Demise)

These actions allow Glinda to regain power in the government of Oz. She works diligently and intentionally to put the hearts and minds of all Oz at ease:

Fellow Ozians, friends, we have been through a frightening time. There will be other times and other things that frighten us. But if you let me, I'd like to try to help. I'd like to try to be ... Glinda the Good. (Act Two, Scene Fourteen – Finale)

Elphaba alone knows the Wizard and Madame Morrible's crimes against Animals, against Doctor Dillamond, against Elphaba, and against Oz as a whole. Similarly, it is Glinda

¹² This particular insult is recited verbatim from Act One, where, after inviting her into sorcery class, Madame Morrible states that Glinda does not have what it takes to become a successful Witch.

alone, who understands Elphaba's magic, actions, and story. Glinda is true to her word and does not share any of her understanding with all of Oz. In her silence, and in her decision to create a new future for Oz, in sacking Morrible and demanding the Wizard's departure, Glinda honors Elphaba's last wish, and through that, truly redeems her friend.

Redemption with the Audience

In the end of the *Wicked* production, Elphaba is also able to receive redemption in the eyes of some of the play's audience members. At the close of the show, viewers have seen the alternate side of the Wicked Witch's story. *Wicked* allows viewers to see a perspective that paints Elphaba in a nearly innocent light. Though she is far from perfect, and has faults, too, Elphaba finally has a platform to share her perspective.

The newly acquired information found in *Wicked's* storyline allows many audience members to, in a way, forgive Elphaba for the havoc she caused in Dorothy's life. In finding the forgiveness and acceptance of audience members, Elphaba gains yet another level of redemption.

Conclusion

Kenneth Burke's three-step guilt-purification-redemption cycle is a relevant theory to apply to *Wicked's* main character, Elphaba. To best understand the gravity and depth of Elphaba's journey through Burke's cycle, it is important to consider specific variables in her own life as has been done throughout Chapter Four: Discussion.

At the beginning of *Wicked*, Elphaba is already seen struggling with numerous causes of guilt, and throughout the play, more guilt is accrued. Several of the more severe causes of guilt for Elphaba include her mother's death, her strained familial relations, her desire to be popular combatting her desire to remain true to her beliefs, and her frequently well-intended magic hurting those she cares about. Elphaba's purification attempts were also varied, including trying

to be a perfect daughter and sister, allowing a friend to give her make-over, adopting and fighting for a worthy cause, and using her magical talents to better the lives of those around her. In many instances, Elphaba's purification attempts backfired, leaving her with more guilt than she faced originally. In the finale of the show, though, Elphaba finally gains her redemption, not only in the eyes of those around her, but also self-redemption as she finally learns to accept herself as an individual.

Also important to consider in any study, are the limitations found within this analysis, as well as any possible suggestions for future research conducted on this artifact, or utilizing Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle. Chapter Five: Limitations, Suggestions, and Conclusion will discuss several complications to this particular study of *Wicked*, and will also share several ideas for research and analysis that could possibly be conducted in the future.

Chapter Five: Limitations, Suggestions and Conclusion

And just to clear the air, I ask forgiveness for the things I've done

you blame me for... none of it seems to matter anymore.

Who can say if I've been changed for the better?

I do believe I have been changed for the better.

Because I knew you... I have been changed for good.

- Elphaba, "For Good"

This study, because of its qualitative nature, was fairly straightforward, and therefore easy to conduct. Using previous research, the soundtrack, and memory from seeing the show, it was possible to assemble a fairly comprehensive picture of the show, the characters, and the plot. Despite the fact that the study was fairly straightforward, there were a few limitations that inhibited the research process, and there are several possible suggestions for any future research conducted.

Limitations

In studying *Wicked*, there were two major setbacks that proved problematic for the research portion in particular. The first limitation is the minimal research done of the character of Elphaba in the past. The second limitation is simply that because *Wicked* is a newer production, and is solely on Broadway, there is no way to find legal, good quality recordings of the show for reference purposes.

As exhibited in Chapter Three: Literature Review, there has been minimal research on the character of Elphaba by past studies and research. Though the show as a whole has been considered, as well as the characters Glinda, Madame Morrible, and even the Wizard, Elphaba seems to have been forgotten in some of the more in depth studies. For comparison purposes, it

was difficult to gain information from others that could help this study.

The second limitation, that proved to be more problematic than the first, was the lack of video recording accessible. Fans who have seen *Wicked*, especially more than once, are likely to remember bits and pieces of the show, but the smaller, more specific details of costuming, staging, and scripting are easily forgotten. The original cast recording of the soundtrack is available for purchase on Amazon, iTunes, and through numerous other retailers, and proved to be a major resource to this particular study. Not having a recording of the show, in its entirety, was problematic. In order to best grasp and understand the staging, lighting, and other ‘live’ variables of *Wicked*, seeing the show, not merely remembering it, is the best course of action.

Through the Internet, it was also possible to access lyrics and an unofficial script that is updated by fans; but having the ability to go back and refer to the show, in its entirety, would have made the study, the research, and the overall analysis much easier to complete.

Suggestions for Future Research

Due to the fact that this study was completely new, with no previous studies pairing Burke’s theory and the character of Elphaba, there are numerous possibilities for future research studies and analyses. Several future studies that could prove quite interesting in furthering the understanding of *Wicked* and its characters, is to complete the same guilt-purification-redemption cycle analysis on other characters within the *Wicked*, and to look more closely at the character of Elphaba and her history. Other theories applied to the characters found in *Wicked* would also allow for further understanding of the musical. The guilt-purification-redemption cycle could also be applied to other Broadway productions to offer the same new insight to other well-known theatrical personas, or other well-known narratives.

Elphaba is the character in *Wicked* that has the most guilt, and in turn seeks out the most

purification, but that does not necessarily mean that the other characters – Glinda, the Wizard of Oz, Madame Morrible, and Fiyero – are not valid and worthwhile characters to be studied using Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle. Furthermore, a study that utilized Burke's theory on other characters, could then, taking the analysis a step further, compare and contrast the ups and downs of each character in relation to each other.

Another suggested study is to take into account the history of Elphaba's character, and the various inspirations that culminated in the character seen on the stage during *Wicked*. Elphaba was not created for the purpose of *Wicked*, but has been in the making for over one hundred years, beginning with L. Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, carrying through (and receiving her most notable changes) in the 1939 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film *The Wizard of Oz*, transforming again for Gregory Maguire's *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch*, and finally the stage production *Wicked*.

Due to the overlapping stories and themes found within the production, there are numerous theories that could offer new perspective on *Wicked* and its characters. Just as past research has considered humor (Schrader) and leadership (Kruse & Prettyman) roles found in *Wicked*, there are other topics not yet considered, including Ozian agenda setting and traditional gender roles. Expanding on the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, and considering the entirety of Kenneth Burke's pentad would also explain not only the fictitious content of *Wicked*, but the production as a whole.

Kenneth Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle could also be applied to Broadway and theatrical productions other than *Wicked*. Many other shows present characters and plots that are full of guilt, purification, and redemption. *Les Miserables*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, and *Rent*, for example, each show characters struggling through life's experiences. In *Wicked*, as well as

the three other productions, characters are presented with guilt, are forced to make decisions to work through purification, and are seen hoping for eventual redemption.

Though this study considered and dissected the particular journey of Elphaba throughout the stage version of the Wicked Witch's life, an analysis including any of the other three Witch stories would find a very different cycle. By considering the history, growth, and augmentation of the character, the Wicked Witch of the West could be understood even more clearly in relation to Burke's guilt-purification-redemption cycle.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the Broadway production *Wicked*, originally opening in 2003, and still playing shows around the world. More specifically, the analysis considered the main character, Elphaba, or as many know her, the Wicked Witch of the West. Applied to the character of Elphaba was Kenneth Burke's theory of the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, and her travels through the three phases was considered and discussed.

In order to gain a complete understanding of Elphaba's character in relation to the guilt-purification-redemption cycle, various pieces of the show were discussed, including the show's script, written by Winnie Holzman, the music and lyrics, written by Stephen Schwartz, and the costuming, including both the attire and make-up. Furthermore, other characters within the production were taken into account, including Elphaba's roommate, Glinda, father and sister, Frax and Nessa, boyfriend, Fiyero, favorite professor, Doctor Dillamond, and headmistress at University, Madame Morrible. With these facets of the show described, the analysis then considered the specific instances and relationships within the show that caused Elphaba's guilt, purification, and ultimate redemption.

In Elphaba's case, many of the actions she took to help secure her purification backfired and were the very actions that lead to her guilt. Luckily, though Elphaba's purification was often unsuccessful, she was still eventually able to reach redemption. This analysis, which considered a Broadway production, and specific character, not frequently studied in the past.

In *Wicked's* first act, Elphaba sings the song "The Wizard and I," and exclaims "My future is unlimited, and I've just had a vision almost like a prophecy. I know it sounds truly crazy, and true the vision's hazy, but I swear someday there'll be a celebration throughout Oz that's all to do with me." Though her ending was not quite what she foresaw, the character of the Wicked Witch of the West is one not soon forgotten by the American society. The original Witch portrayed in Baum's novel was memorable enough, but with her numerous reincarnations, from MGM's *The Wizard of Oz*, Maguire's novel, Broadway's *Wicked*, and others¹³, the Wicked Witch will not soon be forgotten. Instead, the arguably not-so-wicked Witch will remain one of society's most prominent and recognized fictional characters for years to come.

¹³ Witch in *The Muppets' Wizard of Oz* (2005), Azkadellia in *Tin Man* (2007), Wicked Witch in *Tom and Jerry & The Wizard of Oz* (2011), Theodora in *Oz: The Great and Powerful* (2013), and others.

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