This paper deals with the social situations and gender codes that led to the production and subsequent mass consumption of the 1939 MGM film, *The Wizard of Oz*. The central issue of the analysis is the way in which the film serves to support social gender codes. By outlining patriarchal control in the film industry and utilizing an ideological and theoretical backdrop, *The Wizard of Oz* fits the mold of a “woman’s film.” Its recuperative qualities serve to reinforce social gender roles of patriarchal control for the audience as well as Dorothy, and the battle between good and evil is actually an illustration of proper and improper behavior for women, as defined by patriarchal society. With Dorothy as the negotiator between the two, her journey is about learning her proper role and realizing there really is “no place like home,” a physical locality to which she is now happily bound.
PAYING ATTENTION TO THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN:

PATRIARCHY AND *THE WIZARD OF OZ*

A Thesis

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope, Methodology, and Organization</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myth, Film, and the “Woman’s Film”</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Frank Baum, His Life and Times</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939’s <em>The Wizard of Oz</em></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot Synopsis and <em>Oz</em> as Myth</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Underpinnings</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Oz</em> as a Woman’s Film</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics of <em>Oz</em>: Color Schemes as Recuperative</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segment and Motif Deconstruction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Characters of <em>Oz</em></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Further Study</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In 2005, Warner Brothers released a three-disc collector’s edition DVD set of the 1939 MGM film, *The Wizard of Oz*. This set contains not only the film, but also the film’s big-screen predecessors and documentaries surrounding the history, legacy, and creation of the now beloved film. One of the documentaries, *Because of the Wonderful Things it Does: The Legacy of Oz*, works to establish *Oz* as a matriarchy in which Dorothy is a role model for women and young girls. *Wizard of Oz* historian John Fricke calls Baum’s vision of Oz a “matriarchy,” and Peter Glassman recounts a high number of little girls that view Dorothy as their idol and their role model and adds, “she’s a good role model.” Yet, Fricke also calls Oz a “unique utopian kingdom,” and L. Frank Baum’s great granddaughter Gita Dorothy Morena, also a transpersonal psychotherapist, calls family and staying connected with the family the locus of home and a “very feminine value.” The individuals interviewed in the documentary declare the film as a fantastic empowering journey for women, and yet they bind it by the very language and social codes that place women within the restrictions of the gender roles as established by patriarchal society. The awe at the power of Dorothy in the film is thereby limited in the interviewees’ own words by the social gender codes of a patriarchal society.

Their contention then, is that *The Wizard of Oz* is an empowering film for women. Yet, the contradictions evident in the interviewees’ statements provide a focal point for a new analysis, an argument that *The Wizard of Oz* is not an empowering film for women, but rather it falls under the umbrella term of a “woman’s film” and ultimately reinforces patriarchy and the traditional codes that are valued in such a society. In order to create such an argument, it is important to outline a basic understanding of the history of film and its subsequent immersion into American society so that the impact of *The Wizard of Oz* and its status as a “classic” deems the argument worthy of discussing.

The explosion of the motion picture industry into American culture is well documented. In such a capitalistic economy as the United States, the burgeoning mass appeal of the new medium fostered the emergence of a studio system with the sole purpose of manufacturing this new product for audiences already clambering to partake of the experience. With these studios
bent on profiting from this new medium, the product was commodified and subsequently, the top studios controlled the medium. Films were, as Czitrom has noted, more than simply a new method of communication or a new medium. The industry grew at an unprecedented rate and became the most popular art form of the new century (30). Its accessibility to mass populations crossing class lines created an explosion of the industry and began the multi-billion dollar film industry as we know it today.

As with any new technology, from film’s early days of widespread appeal, concerns arose over the potential impact(s) of motion pictures on society and culture. The fact that working-class families and immigrants flocked to motion pictures created resentment from many cultural theorists, who saw film as the degradation of culture and art\(^1\). Peer socialization was also a concern, from the “moral corruption” claims of the darkened movie houses themselves to claims of improper moral and social education through the immersion of audience members into the films. Arguments arose among critics that movies were a potential source for “Americanization” and “moral suasion” because of the presence of large numbers of “the uncultured” attending the films (including immigrants and children) (Czitrom 50). The result was squabbling over censorship and regulation.

More important than this discussion, however, is the question of the overarching influence of film and motion pictures on the general population and American culture. Because of the growth of the industry and the immersion of audience members into the theater experience, film became a new way of both expressing and defining the values of society (Czitrom 59). Even the United States government eventually acknowledged the potential for film as a persuasive tool, perhaps most notably in the Why We Fight series of documentary films dedicated to persuading movie audiences into consensus concerning World War II. As Andrew has indicated, it is the social desire for “information, education, and entertainment” that allowed and created a need for film to exist. This new medium created a grand curiosity for fresh, new and exciting storytelling and allowed the industry to capitalize on that curiosity (15). It is this craving that calls into question the influence of film on American social and cultural values.

With the institution of filmmaking and the mass consumption of these films, the new medium kept in tune with the dominant social values within the country (Denzin 22). Moreover, because films pulled their ideological content from American life, and because of the popularity

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\(^1\) See Cooley (1902/1922, 1909), Park (1926/1967) and the Frankfurt School (Denzin 13).
and widespread appeal of the motion picture industry, the main propagators of popular ideology in film became the very dictators and definers of what is popular in the real world. The social codes of American society were reflected in film and, eventually, what was seen as popular in film became popular in reality (Denzin 30, 33, 34). Thus, though films reflected the values of society, their popularity also began to shape and define what was popular in society. Because film is subject to filmmakers’ desires and messages, and because these messages and desires intertwine with the contextual reception of the audience member as a recipient and interpreter of those messages, film is interconnected with social values and mores in a give and take relationship. Essentially, film influences audience members and audience members influence the creation of new films and messages within film.

Because of the nature of the industry, the institution of film and the identification, reflection, suggestion, and even the redefinition of cultural values, modes and methods of representation were historically controlled by those who controlled the industry; the transmission of messages through film reproduced the same social structures inherent in society. The traditional social codes of patriarchy, racial bias, and class bias are reflected by the industry simply for the mere fact that the dominant race, class, and gender hold power and perpetuate the ideological system over those who are not dominant (Denzin 22).

If then the dominant cultural power segment of society manufactures and sells films to the masses, then their views on cultural roles, however subtle or obvious, intended or not, and the subjugation that occurs as a result of those roles are transmitted to audience members for their consumption and deconstruction. Brummett maintains that one characteristic of culture is that it is experienced through texts, or through “a set of signs related to each other insofar as their meanings all contribute to the same set of effects or functions” (27). Within culture, and thereby, within these texts, lies a conscious set of rules or ideology of “what people perceive to be true” (25) or of value. Since the dominant cultural power segment of society is the Caucasian male, within this rests the underlying ideology of society as a whole as male driven, which slips into movie production. One facet of this ideology is the patriarchal social code for woman as homemaker. Whether obvious to the viewer or not, as determined by individual experience and experience.

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2 An argument can also be made that the same holds true within contemporary society, that the modes and methods of representation are still controlled by those who control the industry.
interpretation, this is one value and place in society that films serve to reinforce male superiority, especially in films about women.

This nature of the industry indicates that the dominant hegemonic power structure within society remained intact for the commercialization and commodification of film. In such a society, those values espoused by the dominant tended to manifest themselves in popular entertainment. According to Kuhn, most dominant cinema is defined by the ideological frameworks that surround the industry of filmmaking itself (the “production, distribution, and exhibition of films for world-wide mass markets”), but also through the uniqueness of each individual film (“what they look like and the kinds of readings they construct”) (22). The ideological framework and social mores and codes reside within the industry itself, from the industry insiders to the films and their messages. Since dominant cinema is the mass-produced films intended for mass consumption, the construction of narratives and texts leads to a deconstruction by the viewer as it relates to personal experience and outside social codes—social codes as, yet again, determined by the dominant power structure. The circular nature of production and consumption, therefore, leads to a reinforcement of those codes, not the least of which is the “proper” place for women in society. Consequently, “women,” as Haskell has suggested, “are not ‘real women’ unless they marry and bear children” (2).

Historically, films about women have tended to reinforce this social code of domesticity. Beginning with the mass-production heyday of Hollywood films, any strong female character that acts outside the traditional roles of patient mother or loyal housewife, or one who does not actively seek those roles, cannot end up perfectly happy until she relinquishes independence upon finding them\(^3\), or is punished\(^4\), or otherwise killed for her efforts\(^5\). According to Basinger, “The woman’s film rule book of behavior tells women to be good or else. To accept their jobs as women or else” (55). Films about women, referred to here as “the woman’s film,” tend to punish women who do not do their jobs as women or follow codes and positions as dictated by the patriarchal society.

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\(^3\) See, for example, the character of Clarissa in 1939’s *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Clarissa, played by Jean Arthur, is an independent woman who decides to take it upon herself to aid Jefferson (Jimmy Stewart) in his Capitol Hill dreams, in the end, succumbing to the woman’s job of love.

\(^4\) An example of this is *Mildred Pierce* (1945), in which the title character (Joan Crawford) strikes it rich on her own, but her independence sees to her downfall.

One of the most popular films in American history is the 1939 MGM version of *The Wizard of Oz*, based on L. Frank Baum’s 1900 book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Though two previous silent interpretations of the book were made in 1910 and 1925, it is the 1939 film version that skyrocketed to mythic status. Despite multiple changes in directors and casting, occurrences that today would predict near disaster for any major Hollywood film, *The Wizard of Oz* of 1939 remains one of the most popular, most beloved, and most watched films in American history.

*The Wizard of Oz* is a part of the American consciousness, continually appearing in everything from multiple reinterpretations where the standard of comparison is set by the film as opposed to the book, to plot elements in television shows. As *Wizard of Oz* historian John Fricke says in *Because of the Wonderful Things it Does: The Legacy of Oz*, “It’s almost impossible to watch television for a week and not hear an Oz reference, a paraphrase of Oz dialogue…” The mere line “Toto, I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore” is practically a cliché used in all sorts of media to mean “I think we’re someplace new and strange.” Ruby slippers, yellow brick roads, and little cairn terriers all invoke images and memories from the film. In short, to say *The Wizard of Oz* is a classic film is an understatement. It may not be the greatest film ever made, but it invades social consciousness, in part due to its multiple television broadcasts each year and its continual release and re-release in new DVD sets. Because of this prevalence, *The Wizard of Oz* is a film that should be examined under critical devices to decode the many messages present in such a well known film—messages that go beyond the overriding themes of good versus evil, friendship and family, and “there’s no place like home.”

The film follows Kansas teen Dorothy Gale as she is whisked away by a tornado to the Land of Oz and her subsequent mythological journey of fairy tale proportions, in which she searches for a way to return home. The theme of home is the most prevalent throughout the film; however, the film also contains a subtext. What choice does Dorothy in particular and women in general have in life? The choice Dorothy, and thereby any woman, faces is to be a free-roaming heroine with the choice to guide and lead, or to be powerless and confined to the home, confined

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6 See *The Wiz* (1978), starring Diana Ross and Michael Jackson as an example.
7 An episode of HBO’s “Curb Your Enthusiasm” co-starring Ted Danson had a dream sequence using strong Oz elements.
8 American Film Institute lists *The Wizard of Oz* at number six on their list of “America’s Greatest Movies,” preceded by *Citizen Kane* (1941), *Casablanca* (1942), *The Godfather* (1972), *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), respectively.
to “no place like home.” Caught in the gender wars, caught between duties at home and with family or the outside world, the choice, under such patriarchal social codes, spins the mythic tale of good versus evil. Ultimately she will succumb to her desire to return home, but what does that mean to men and women under the patriarchal social code of American society? Home is a physical locality to which Dorothy wishes to return, a physical locality to which “good” women were, historically, especially in film, bound. While her journey seems to be marked by a sense of discovery, the question is what really does Dorothy learn, understand, and accept in terms of her proper place in society and how does this conform to roles as dictated by patriarchal social codes? While other analyses of the film have occurred, the social implications of the film when examined under the lens of the woman’s film have not been widely discussed. Through a critical analysis of the choices Dorothy makes in regards to her circumstances, and a breakdown of the film’s major female characters and technical qualities, the film’s pervasiveness allows the broader question of the roles of women in film and society to be addressed.

The Wizard of Oz spans many genres (including drama, musical, and fantasy); however, the film also fits under the umbrella term “woman’s film” as defined by Basinger. In her examination, Basinger defines the woman’s film as a film about women that offers the spectator a glimpse into what is missing from a woman’s own life. In these films women could typically see themselves breaking the stereotypical boundaries imposed on them in reality. Thus, women were leaders, heads of corporations, independent, and in control of their destinies until the rule of the woman’s film was imposed: they must relinquish power, be punished, or be killed. This rule often led to recuperative endings, ultimately sending the female viewer away from the theater with the reassurance that she is doing the right thing by being the “proper housewife,” and by living within the proper guidelines as determined by social codes (6). The Wizard of Oz seems to fit Basinger’s schemata because the female spectator identifies with Dorothy’s longing, and in the end, is reassured that there really is “no place like home.”

The Wizard of Oz also follows the loose structure of a mythological fantasy journey, harkening back to the uniquely American fairy tale of the original book. As Voytilla suggests, “Movies serve the function of all storytelling, to entertain, inspire and perhaps even teach us to cope with problems…moviemaking can be considered the contemporary form of mythmaking” (1). In The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy, in true heroic fashion, is called to adventure and enters a special world. There are tests, allies, and enemies, and the heroic return home with the
knowledge that “There’s no place like home.” As Glinda the Good Witch of the North says, “She had to learn it for herself” (*Wizard of Oz*). The journey teaches her. As the major characters in the journey, the female characters break down into role-players within the structure of the mythological story. The men are “buffoons,” made into comical interpretations and/or caricatures of the men Dorothy knows from her Kansas life. On the surface, Dorothy is the heroine, Glinda is the mentor, the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion are allies or helpmates, and the enemy is the Wicked Witch of the West. Dorothy and her helpmates are all on a quest for something, but Dorothy is the only one who apparently does not already have what she seeks: the “magic elixir,” the knowledge of home. Why does Dorothy not already have what she seeks? Though she always wanted to return to Kansas since arriving in the Land of Oz, she never knew why or how. By the end of the film, the “why” becomes the fact that her “heart’s desire” is in her “own backyard” (*Wizard of Oz*). It wasn’t enough for her to want to return. She had to know why she should return. The question is then, given the male dominated American culture, what does this desire to return home suggest about the role of Dorothy specifically, but also about women in general?

The desires of these helpmates become tantamount to Dorothy’s, thus becoming another reason for Dorothy to continue her quest. Ultimately, for the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, the journey becomes more about learning that they already have what they seek; for Dorothy, however, since she already seeks to return home, the quest becomes more than a simple desire to return home. The more resistant Oz is or seems to be in giving her up, the more determined she is to return home. By being the familiar in the unfamiliar, the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion give her reason other than herself to keep focused on the Yellow Brick Road, thereby keeping her focused upon learning what she must learn that will enable her to return home.

In combining the elements of the mythological journey with those of the woman’s film, a deeper examination of one subtextual element or theme of *The Wizard of Oz* is possible. The characteristics of the woman’s film and the mythological journey run parallel to Dorothy’s own journey, one that ultimately provides a recuperative ending to a fantastic path of discovery. She always wants to return to Kansas, but what is the deeper sense of purpose that, first, enables her to embark on the journey, and second, ultimately allows her to accept the gender-defined role waiting for her back home? Her lack of purpose, her desire for purpose, and the discovery of
that purpose is what ultimately allows her to return home. But what is that discovery, really? What does she truly learn that enables her to accept the place she left?

The relevance and importance of such an analysis rests in the proliferation of the film; because it was so popular and remains as such, the multiple messages within the film encourage and validate constant examinations and analyses. While much attention has been focused on the film, little attention has actually been paid to why Dorothy embarks on the journey in the first place, and what the characters really represent in a world steeped in patriarchal social codes. With a story such as *The Wizard of Oz* so entrenched in American social consciousness, it is important to examine the many messages within the film that lie just beneath the surface of “home.” Though this value is a part of the whole that enables the timelessness of the film, it is not the whole of the film.

The problem, therefore, becomes the myriad messages dispersed throughout a film that are absorbed and mainstreamed into American consciousness and culture. If the reproduction of sound and images in full color through Hollywood films “aligned the industry with dominant American values” (Denzin 22), what message did the film send to women of the era? Because of the pervasiveness of the film, what messages are still transmitted to women? With the principle characters in *The Wizard of Oz* being women, does the film serve to put women back in the box and, if so, how? An ideological examination of the characters and segments will help to uncover the message just beneath the surface, and the timelessness of the film requires the examination.

Research Question

An understanding of the history of *The Wizard of Oz* and its place in American film history is essential to uncovering the timelessness of the film in American social consciousness. In uncovering its importance and its timelessness then, the application of theoretical perspectives regarding women in film allow for the use of Jeanine Basinger’s schemata as a tool to examine the film, characters, various segments, and specific themes. What do Dorothy’s circumstances, actions, and choices suggest and/or reveal about the role of women in society and women in film?
Literature Review

Because the author of the original story, L. Frank Baum, lived his life as the film industry emerged and the American landscape ripened for the creation of a new, purely American fairy tale, a basic historical contextualization is important before any analysis can begin, both of film in general and the creation of *The Wizard of Oz*\(^9\). For this analysis, it is also important to be familiar with the idea of the mythological journey so that the ideas within may be applied to the scope as provided by Basinger.

Useful in studying the mythological journey is the work of Campbell, who believes “It has always been the prime function of mythology…to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward” (11). Vogler adds that the Hero’s Journey is analogous to the inner transformation that heroes have shared throughout time and space (*vii*). Voytilla believes that filmmaking is just a new form of mythmaking (1). He provides, then, the framework for analyzing critical segments within *The Wizard of Oz* as they relate to the mythological journey and, in addition, Basinger’s schemata. According to Voytilla, film as myth allows viewers to witness and identify with a transformation within the hero, the protagonist that speaks to cultural codes.

Though the elements are fluid rather than rigid, Voytilla’s model follows twelve basic or typical steps:

1) The Ordinary World: This world allows the viewer to know the protagonists. It introduces the viewer to the central problem and often the central theme of the work.

2) The Call to Adventure: It is here that the eventual quest becomes apparent.

3) Refusal of the Call: The hero or heroine questions the journey.

4) Meeting the Mentor: It is here that the hero/ine gains the confidence and/or insight in order to face the upcoming Threshold.

5) Crossing the Threshold: The hero/ine commits to the journey.

6) Tests, Allies, Enemies: Friends and foes are revealed, as are trials that test the hero/ine’s commitment to the journey.

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\(^9\) This includes the book in 1900, the 1939 film version, and important chronological references in between.
7) Approach the Inmost Cave: Preparations for the final confrontation are made.

8) The Ordeal: This is the central crisis in which the hero/ine’s commitment is fully tested, the outcome of which determines the knowledge and power of the hero/ine.

9) Reward: After overcoming The Ordeal, the hero/ine receives that which s/he desires.

10) The Road Back: Recommitting to completion of the journey.

11) The Resurrection: A “cleansing” or “purification,” that occurs.

12) Return with the Elixir: The final reward for the hero/ine.\textsuperscript{10}

In the same vein, it is important in this analysis to establish \textit{The Wizard of Oz} as a fairy tale. Since many qualities of the fairy tale and mythological structure overlap, establishing \textit{Oz} as a uniquely American fairy tale makes it possible to apply the same characteristics to the film. Barrett believes that at the time L. Frank Baum was writing, American life was ready for the creation of a new fairy tale.

As previously noted, Basinger’s \textit{A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women 1930-1960} will serve as the model for this analysis. Both Heck and Walters call for a deconstruction of images beyond what is said. Walters believes in the “‘signification’ paradigm,” which echoes Heck’s analysis of the “ideological dimension of media messages.” Both suggest that what is said in a message isn’t necessarily as important as how it is said. Heck and Walters justify the deconstruction of \textit{The Wizard of Oz} beyond surface values of what is being represented into a thorough examination of how it is being represented.

While Heck and Walters provide an ideological stepping off point for the analysis and deconstruction, Mulvey and John Berger provide an important framework for constructing an analysis of this type. Mulvey believes in what she calls the “male gaze,” in which the objectification of women is an accepted and natural occurrence under patriarchal values. Under the male hegemonic power structure, attractiveness as a physical characteristic and as a personality characteristic creates desirability or undesirability in the eyes of such a patriarchal

\textsuperscript{10} The steps of the mythological journey are pulled from Voytilla’s book \textit{Myth and the Movies: Discovering the Mythic Structure of 50 Unforgettable Films}, pages 8-12 (see bibliography for full citation).
society. As an object of male fantasy and/or desire, to be seen as attractive is good; conversely, to be deemed unattractive is bad or evil.

Berger agrees, suggesting also that women must scrutinize the ways in which they appear to men because that is the way in which women are ultimately judged. Again, they are the object of male desire and fantasy, and therefore, not only do men objectify women, but women objectify themselves in order to succeed in such a patriarchal society. Because both Mulvey and Berger come to the same conclusion under different approaches (Mulvey as feminist, Berger as Marxist), they serve as multi-disciplinary theoretical support for a broader lens of critique. They both speak to social codes under ideological foundations.

Kaplan believes it is possible to deconstruct images with the understanding that a woman is presented as “what she represents for man, not in terms of what she actually signifies” (18). By separating oneself from the male gaze, Kaplan suggests that a deconstruction of the signs present in a text allows a critical understanding of certain meanings within a patriarchal society.

Social codes and the myths of subjection that patriarchy is built upon transfer through the filmmaking process and into film, according to Haskell. After listing famous actresses known for powerful roles and personalities (such as Bette Davis, Katherine Hepburn, and Joan Crawford) and the contradictions present in their roles of ambition that ultimately gave way to love, Haskell believes that audiences were simply not interested in a woman outside patriarchal codes as a popular heroine, and that, simultaneously, Hollywood was also not interested in providing one (4). Haskell outlines the demands of the patriarchal structure of society, and consequently, the patriarchal structure of filmmaking that filters down through the filmmaking process. (363).

With the understanding of the theories and theorists mentioned as well as an historical basis, support is evident for the use of Jeanine Basinger as a model for this analysis. She offers a broader view of the historical context of women in film grounded in theoretical work from multiple disciplines, which allows The Wizard of Oz to be analyzed under a new lens.

Basinger begins by articulating the difficulty in defining the woman’s film. Her analysis spans genres, and serves as an umbrella term for what she finally states is “a juxtaposition [between]…the Way Women Ought to Be and the Other Way” (10). As she also states, “To convince women that marriage and motherhood were the right path, movies had to show women making the mistake of doing something else” (6). In The Wizard of Oz, the opposing nature of
Glinda and The Wicked Witch of the West, and Dorothy’s negotiation between the two, amounts to an active negotiation by an adolescent between “The Way Women Ought to Be and the Other Way.” Despite the agency of the three main female characters, the manner in which they relate to the men in their lives dictates their acts of agency.

Though she never mentions The Wizard of Oz in her analysis, the film seems to fit into the schemata Basinger sets forth because of the various roles the women in Oz fulfill. Basinger defines the proper woman as a loving homemaker, dutiful wife, and mother. In The Wizard of Oz, these characteristics can be applied to Glinda because her agency is always in the interest of the male Wizard. Basinger defines the bad woman as the opposite; thus, Glinda’s opposite, The Wicked Witch of the West. Basinger does not pin the woman’s film to one specific genre, and as such, The Wizard of Oz is still able to span multiple genres (i.e., drama, fantasy, musical). In this manner, The Wizard of Oz also fits Basinger’s schemata.

The uniqueness of The Wizard of Oz then, is that the film encompasses multiple genres while maintaining its focus on women. According to Basinger, a woman’s film is recuperative, but only for the viewer: in identifying with the longing of the protagonist in the film, the film ultimately reassures the viewer that her own life isn’t so bad after all (6).

The nature of film, according to Basinger, was that “…movies were really only about one thing: a kind of yearning. A desire to know what you didn’t know, have what you didn’t have, and feel what you were afraid to feel. They were a door to the Other, to the Something Else” (5). The Wizard of Oz fits this mold perfectly: at the beginning of the film, Dorothy yearned for life and experiences beyond her Kansas farm that would give her a sense of purpose and acceptance beyond the nuisance that she seemed to be to her family, friends, and socialites (as represented by Miss Gulch). Her yearning opened that door to Oz, a land with the potential to fulfill those desires. The film is about Dorothy’s yearning, and the mythical journey she embarks upon as a result of that yearning. Dorothy’s call is the call to adventure, and thus, the audiences’ call to do more than fall into the trappings of the roles set forth by patriarchal society. As is common for characters in the majority of women’s films, Dorothy is able to take the audience on that journey and exploration with her. In 1939, the status of women in society was ripe for the journey with Dorothy. Through the song “Over the Rainbow,” Dorothy creates an immediate identification with the viewer, thus allowing viewers (especially women) to embark on the journey with her.
Basinger also examines the paradox of the woman’s film and believes it is the reason for the success of the genre: “It both held women in social bondage and released them into a dream of potency and freedom” (6). *The Wizard of Oz* released Dorothy into a world of “potency and freedom.” She was literally tossed into a world that challenged her to recognize new and different codes of behavior and forced her to find her way using her own skills and intellect. On one level then, the film draws women in because it reflects and challenges social norms and roles through the dream world of Oz, yet holds women in social bondage through the use of the dream and the return of Dorothy to Kansas.

Basinger supplies a new lens with which to examine *The Wizard of Oz*. It is through the application of Basinger’s schemata that questions are allowed to be asked as they pertain to the ways in which women relate, react and respond to the messages within the film.

**Scope, Methodology, and Organization**

This study is a critical textual analysis of *The Wizard of Oz*, examining the representations of the central female characters and their relationships under the tenets of patriarchal society and a critical lens as provided by Jeanine Basinger. The analysis, supported by the ideological framework of Heck, Walters, Berger, and Mulvey, involves an application of Basinger’s schemata regarding women in film to *The Wizard of Oz* in an attempt to examine and understand the manner in which patriarchal social codes and gender roles are reinforced in such a popular and well-known film. This examination contains an incorporation of the history of women in film, a glimpse at mythology and film, the history of *The Wizard of Oz* (from its children’s book origins on), and analyses of key segments, characters, and technical qualities within the film.

The second chapter opens with a glimpse at the history of women in film and the mythological qualities of film. The chapter also hosts a glimpse at the history behind the now classic 1939 film, including portions of L. Frank Baum’s life and times and the creation of his book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. In placing the film within its relevant context, tracing it from its book origins to its contemporary influences, will illustrate how the story ballooned from a simple fairy tale to a film with socially ingrained reference points: why a cairn terrier signifies Toto, why a Halloween witch often incorporates green makeup, and so on. Though the specifics
of these examples will not be discussed at great length, their existence will be understood through the historical timeline of the film. Chapter Two will conclude with a plot synopsis in which key segments of the film are identified and detailed as they relate to Voytilla’s aforementioned “Hero’s Journey.”

Key segments within the film that will be utilized in both Chapter Two and Chapter Three focus on the nature of the two witches and show Dorothy interacting with the two characters. They include the opening scenes that provide glimpses into the motivation behind Dorothy’s desire to break away from the Kansas farm, including the inattention by her family and the perceived antagonism from Miss Gulch. Another key segment includes Dorothy’s arrival in Oz and her initial encounters with Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West. These segments and others will be broken down into the steps previously mentioned regarding the mythological journey and allow for a deconstruction of main characters that fit into Basinger’s schemata.

Basinger’s work will be prevalent throughout the analysis. An application of her schemata of the woman’s film involves defining the term, and in doing so, the groundwork is laid for an in-depth character analysis based on the ideological framework as provided by Heck, Walters, Berger, and Mulvey. In exploring the various roles each character embodies within the larger context of the analysis, elements of the mythological journey under the umbrella of the woman’s film and patriarchal codes will advance the analysis. Chapter Three will include a portion on the aesthetics of color, segment and motif deconstruction, and character deconstruction and analysis. Chapter Four will be a conclusion of the analysis and highlight potential areas for further study.

This analysis will attempt to demonstrate the film’s recuperative nature for both Dorothy and the audience, and it will subject the dichotomous nature of the two witches to an examination deeper than the main themes and fantastic journey. Under the lens of the dominant patriarchal structure and in utilizing the framework as described by Jeanine Basinger, a deconstruction of the film will help the reader understand a new perspective and show a danger in taking a classic film at face value.
CHAPTER II

Myth, Film, and the “Woman’s Film”

From 1900 through 1930, motion pictures completely ingratiated themselves into the fabric of American existence (Denzin 14). This new medium became a way for Americans to make sense out of their daily lives. Traditional myths took on new lives, new faces, and new stories, but, as Denzin notes, films “used logic of the hero and heroine to tell stories about individuals and their families” (29). It is in these myths that key social codes and mores were continually identified, perpetuated, and, in some cases, even redefined. As Caputi says, myths are “narratives that…offer a paradigm of the basic values and meanings of society” (164) and are “understood as coded transmissions communicating [universally understood] meanings that exist in an ongoing process of manifestation, interpretation, and reinterpretation” (292). Film gave myth a new visual method of communication that allowed the perpetuation of values espoused by common society a new outlet. The values held by this common society trickled into film from studio executives, to writers, to distributors and finally to the receptive audience. The heroes and heroines of traditional myth carried their sense-making journeys from the printed word onto the screen.

However, the heroes and heroines of the traditional myth also transformed into recognizable people, from the trials and tribulations of the next-door-neighbor type to the glorified cowboy and/or gangster. The mere title of Campbell’s book The Hero With A Thousand Faces points to the malleable transformation of hero to hero; the qualities of one hero are more than likely the qualities of another. However, the face, context, and hardship change from story to story. As Vogler notes,

The Hero’s Journey was [Campbell’s] all-embracing metaphor for the deep inner journey of transformation that heroes in every time and place seem to share, a path that leads them through great movements of separation, descent, ordeal and return. (vii)

In the case of film, these attributes are immediately visualized for the audience. “Moviemaking,” according to Voytilla, “can be considered the contemporary form of mythmaking…a story [that] resonates on a universal level by answering our deepest mysteries” (1).
In essence, myths are narratives of creation and the evolution of basic human qualities, values, and tenets. Movies, then, transferred those myths from the written form into a visual form, allowing viewers to witness and identify with a transformation within the hero or heroine, the protagonist that speaks to certain cultural codes. It is in this reinterpretation Caputi mentions that allows the myths applications in contemporary society, that allows the identification with the audience, and that allows the hero/heroine to take on many forms.

In film, the journey readers once read about and envisioned for themselves became the moviemakers’ representation of the journey, already visualized and extrapolated for the audience. And yet, as with the nature of film, through the darkened theater, the audience member is still so caught up in the hero or heroine’s journey, that it is as if the audience member was on the journey for himself or herself. The movie industry helped audience members make sense out of the world around them in a more immediate fashion than books. The transformation, enlightenment, and conquering of evil played out visually for the audience, and the cultural codes were, for the first time, spelled out on a larger-than-life screen.

The inherent structure of the myth applies across media. As Voytilla says, “All stories consist of common structural elements or Stages found universally in myths, fairy tales, dreams, and movies” (5). These myths within film, then, serve alongside the social values delineated from the top executives down through the audiences. If films helped audiences make sense of the world around them, then the myths the films displayed also served this purpose. Denzin states that as the motion picture industry became “one of the largest industries in the country” (14), it was the “cinematic imagination” that conformed to the values and codes of the larger American social and cultural order.

The movies create[d] the gender and race-biased cinematic eye and an attendant cinematic imagination fitted to the values of the larger American culture...Ritualized and emotional, these stories allowed people to make sense of their everyday lives...They unified audiences by reinforcing key cultural values...(15, 29)

The social division between women and men and their respective gender roles is one of the key cultural values reinforced by movies.

Despite Mary Pickford’s 1919 collaboration with Charlie Chaplin, D. W. Griffith, and Douglas Fairbanks that resulted in the creation of United Artists (Film History), for the most
part, women remained outside the controlling sections of the film industry. Instead, they were relegated to on-screen roles, and as much glamour and emphasis was placed upon them, they still remained mostly outside the decision making machinations of the industry. The power of patriarchy ruled over the film industry, and as Denzin suggests, “over-arching this representational structure [of film] would be…the traditional gender and racial stratification system” (22). Through audience identification and the hierarchy of the industry, the power of film and widespread access to theaters consequently served to reinforce already established gender roles. The ideology trickled down from studio writers and executives and reinforced those familiar cultural values.

As cinema emerged as the dominant form of entertainment, the construction of narratives and texts naturally led to a deconstruction by the viewer, since the films relate to personal experience and prominent social codes. These social codes are, yet again, determined by the dominant power structure. The circular nature of production and consumption therefore led to a reinforcement of social codes, including the patriarchal code and the “proper” place for women in society. Haskell notes that “Women are not ‘real women’ unless they marry and bear children” (2). The dominant hegemonic power structure of patriarchal American society was the same power structure that ran the film studios, and thus dominant cinema reflected and supported this value:

Audiences for the most part were not interested in seeing, and Hollywood was not interested in sponsoring, a smart, ambitious woman as a popular heroine…A movie heroine could act on the same power and career drives as a man if, at the climax, they (sic) took second place to the sacred love of a man. (Haskell 4)

Haskell’s 1974 book is now a classic glimpse at the treatment of women in dominant cinema. Highly critical of the term “woman’s film,” Haskell called it “soft-core emotional porn for the frustrated housewife” (155).

Despite Haskell’s critical view, she defines the woman’s film in much the same manner as does Basinger. In her 1993 text, Basinger articulates the difficulty in defining the woman’s film, but ultimately, she calls the woman’s film “a juxtaposition [between]…the Way Women Ought to be and the Other Way” (10). Basinger claims the woman’s film as one of passivity rather than of action, where “a film about a woman, or about a woman’s life, is going to be about
love, marriage, men, sex, fashion, glamour, and the need to make a decision about having a career or not” (9).

Despite the difficulty Basinger had in defining the term “woman’s film,” she eventually came up with one workable, concise, definition:

A woman’s film is a movie that places at the center of its universe a female who is trying to deal with the emotional, social, and psychological problems that are specifically connected to the fact that she is a woman.

A woman, then, in the woman’s film—as defined by dominant patriarchal social codes—is thereby relegated to the action of how she relates to, not the world, but to men.

Both Haskell and Basinger identify similar properties of the woman’s film. The first real property Haskell mentions is that in a woman’s film, “the woman—a woman—is at the center of the universe” (155). This is also the first property of the woman’s film that Basinger expands upon: “Everything is couched in terms of what are presumed to be the major events of a woman’s life: love, men, marriage, motherhood, and all the usual ‘feminine’ things” (14-15). Haskell continues by mentioning four non-exclusive themes of the woman’s film: sacrifice, affliction, choice, and competition (Haskell 163). These themes, though conceptualized under different names (e.g., “Repression” and “Liberation”), are also Basinger’s central themes of the woman’s film.

Like Basinger, within these themes, Haskell picks up on their unforgiving nature; no matter how much a woman sacrifices, no matter how much a woman may suffer, her job and her job alone is to bear her own cross with a smile and a freshly baked cake. “A heroine,” Haskell argues, “gets moral credit for not telling anyone of her illness…while only divulging it to an audience of millions” (168). Sympathy, therefore, is attached only to the viewer because it is the viewer alone who knows of the sacrifice. Since the women in the woman’s film were discontent with their lives, there is a parallel with the basic paradox of the woman’s film as described by Basinger: “It drew women in with images of what was lacking in their own lives and then sent them home reassured that their own lives were the right thing afterall” (Basinger 6). The dominating social constructs as filtered through the woman’s film served as a perpetuation of the social codes by showing women what would happen if they didn’t live life by the dominant patriarchal codes. Included in these codes is the idea that a woman’s career is simply to love
(Basinger 17-18). Basinger even quotes the 1939 film *The Women* as representative of the difference between male and female movies: “Oh, a man can ride a horse to the range above, but a woman has to ride on the wings of love.” It is within these contexts that the analysis of Chapter III will operate.

L. Frank Baum, His Life and Times

It is notable that Baum’s life and experiences occur nearly simultaneously with the advent of the film industry. A lifelong fan of the theater, Baum’s welcoming of the new film technology served as a catalyst for the film adaptations of his books, and his entrepreneurial exploits—both observed and undertaken—help illustrate a natural desire for progressing *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* beyond its storybook origins. Baum was always on the fringes of the film industry, ready, willing, and even promoting this new technology as a new way to see and understand his writings.

Born on May 15, 1856 in Chittenago, New York (Rogers 1), Lyman Frank Baum’s life is a snapshot of the American Dream in motion. With an entrepreneurial spirit and a dreamer’s flair, constants in his life included his love for writing, passion for theater, the embracing of new technologies, and his love for his family and children. Entrained in a constantly changing society and a quickly evolving country, Baum’s experiences lent themselves well to the emergence of a writer with a knack for fantasy.

He was the seventh of nine children born to Cynthia Stanton and Benjamin Ward Baum, and one of only five to survive childhood. His father was a barrel maker by trade, but he was also a businessman, with endeavors that included a pump-vending business and the manufacture of butter and cheese. He also dealt in real estate and banking, and was also a successful oilman (Rogers 1-2). By the time he was ten, L. Frank Baum spent his home life growing up on a vast estate that his mother called Rose Lawn. His father’s entrepreneurial spirit showed up in his son time and time again, both in the realm of business and in his promotion of the *Oz* books.

Baum reportedly suffered from a poor heart, which, after he had spent two years in a military academy, led well to a childhood spent writing and daydreaming (Riley 16). He published an amateur newspaper called the *Rose Lawn Home Journal* with a basic printing press his father bought him, and in time, published two other journals, *Stamp Collector* and *Empire*
(Riley 17-18). By the time he was seventeen, Baum had established his own entrepreneurial spirit, following in his father’s footsteps, and by the age of eighteen, Baum could be found staking out the string of theaters his father had bought. Despite a setback that swindled young Baum out of time and money, Baum’s love for the theater never diminished. He turned to raising prized Hamburg chickens and publishing *The Poultry Record*, a monthly journal focusing on the chicken trade. However, soon he found himself back in the theater circuit, managing, performing, and even writing (Rogers 7-8).

Riley believes Baum’s childhood activities to be important steps toward the eventual writing endeavor known as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*: “…they were not the passing fancies of an idle child in delicate health. He mastered each one to a degree that some internal idea of excellence demanded, and rather than discarding any of them, each became a part of the pattern of his life” (17). Baum spent his childhood writing and daydreaming (Rogers 5), and his passion for the theater blossomed at an early age. As Rogers points out, elements of his youthful endeavors would show up in later writings (3, 7-8). Rogers and Riley both suggest it is these youthful endeavors, these activities that he mastered, that would eventually play into his creation of the ultimate American fairy tale.

In 1882, Frank married Maud Gage, daughter of suffragette and women’s right’s activist Matilda Gage. As his theater work slowed, he took a job as a traveling salesman for his brother’s lubricating business. After a series of misfortunes, including an illness Maud suffered for years after the birth of their second son and the apparent suicide of an office clerk who had gambled away the business’s money, the family moved to Aberdeen (in what is now South Dakota) in 1888. Baum had grand visions of opening a variety store, a “Bazaar,” in this new territory opened up by the completion of the railroad (Rogers 17-21). It is said his description of Kansas actually came from his time spent in South Dakota. While in Aberdeen, Baum continued to write and publish newspapers and journals, and edited for *Pioneer*, a journal focusing on the suffrage movement. After the initial grand success and subsequent failure of “Baum’s Bazaar,” the Baums moved to Chicago, Illinois, in 1891.

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11 Rogers cites scarecrows that inhabited Baum’s father’s grain and livestock farm. Baum once told reporters “They always seemed to my childish imagination as just about to wave their arms, straighten up and stalk across the field on their long legs” (3). She also cites his chicken raising as inspiration for the character “Billina” in *Ozma of Oz* (7-8).

12 See Barrett, 154.
At the time, Chicago was the second largest city in the United States, and a virtual epicenter not only for commerce, but also the arts (Rogers 45). In 1893, the World’s Columbian Exposition took place, celebrating new marvels of technology, including electricity and Thomas Edison’s Kinetoscope. The grand scale of the fair and the myriad innovations present piqued both Baum’s interests and imagination. The “White City,” as it was called, kept its eyes toward the future, both in the interest of technological advancements and in the interest of comfortable city dwelling. As the Baum family frequently visited the White City; “its fountains, domes, minarets, spires, and fluttering banners suggested the architecture of the Emerald City” (Rogers 46). The White City’s grandiosity sat in stark contrast to the desolate Aberdeen, a notion not lost on Baum.

After moving to Chicago, Baum finally found employment as a reporter for the year-old Chicago Evening Post, but eventually became a traveling salesman. The family struggled through financial difficulties, but whenever he was home, Baum, ever the family man, always managed to create a fun atmosphere for the children. Though he always had received encouragement from his family when it came to writing, it was his mother-in-law, Matilda Gage, who was the major catalyst for his beginning to write fantasies for children. Her own personal spiritual beliefs influenced his stories (and thereby the tales he told to his own children and neighborhood children), and it was she who ultimately recognized his potential for the success he so longed for (Rogers 50-54). In 1897, he wrote and published Mother Goose in Prose, and while working on the journal Show Window, an innovative trade periodical for window dressers, he continued to write for children.

Legend has it The Wonderful Wizard of Oz began as a story for his sons and their friends. The children asked Baum to name the land his characters roamed, and glancing around the room, his eyes fell on the bottom drawer of a filing cabinet labeled “O-Z.” Always harboring a passion for theater and the performing arts, Baum eventually realized his dream of creating a modern American fairy tale with The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, published in 1900.

His success with previous books for children (including Mother Goose in Prose and Father Goose, published in 1899) gave him confidence to commit The Wonderful Wizard of Oz to paper, and allowed him to deepen “his child’s story with adult speculations about identity and appearance and reality” (Rogers 73), beginning with the opening of his tale:

13 See Swartz, 9 and Fricke et al, 1.
Opening his fairy story with a grim naturalistic picture of a poor midwestern farm showed striking originality. In four simple paragraphs, he conveyed the vastness of the prairie, its lack of trees, its drought, its loneliness, its liability to cyclones, and the effects of these conditions upon those who loved there. At the same time, he set up a wonderfully effective background to contrast with Oz. (Rogers 73)

Combining his experiences with the children’s story and an identification with adult struggles both personal and observed onto the written page, Baum placed *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* into the American consciousness in April 1900 (Rogers 73). It entered the world in a time of vast technological advancement, with identifiable markers of American identity, past, present, and possible future.

Much like the descriptions of his early adolescent endeavors, the description of Baum’s life to this point illustrates the experiences, factors, and conditions that proved ripe for the creation of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The harsh realities faced by the ever-optimistic Baum as Aberdeen dried up influenced the stark conditions of the Kansas farmland and the daily struggle of farmers, personified by the Gales. The Emerald City reflected the grand nature of the promises held in Chicago and the World’s Colombian Exposition.

Barrett argues that the circumstances of late nineteenth century life in American development were ripe for the creation of a new, purely American fairy tale. They are the conditions and experiences, as previously noted, that Baum had been exposed to and was able to incorporate into his own fantasy tale.

With a history well entrenched in moral, social, and class structures, traditional fairy tales engage fantasy elements in efforts to explain the unexplainable, to dictate ethics and standards, and to entertain. It is logical then, that with the drastic conflicts of these elements that, crudely speaking, created the United States, the “Old World” fairy tales no longer served their purpose in America, other than to entertain:

The traditional characters of such tales—kings, queens, princes, and princesses—were out of step with democracy, and magic itself was dwarfed by the reality of the American experience, filled as it was with seemingly unremitting technological invention, geographical expansion, and economic development. (Barrett 151)
The circumstances surrounding the predominant American culture meant the “Old World” tales were tales of the past, of legacy, rather than identity.

The American Dream is part of the dominant cultural history; a notion that never dies. However, when the lofty excitement over this dream settled into the realities of existence, “the reality of the American experience” mutated into a new identity:

…a space opened for the American fairy tale. That [American] dream, constructed on realities as visceral as available frontier, westward expansion, financial success, and technological know-how, could only be resurrected in fantasy. (Barrett 151)

As the harsh realities of a new emerging social, cultural, ethical, and class system settled, a place for the American fairy tale opened, a place for a new fairy tale unique to the dominant culture of the young country. “The fairy tale comes alive,” Barrett suggests, “to chronicle the rise and fall of the American dream” (151).

It is within this newly emerging and constantly evolving identity that Baum lived and wrote. His own history is speckled with successes and failures, both personal in nature and as an observer who continually found himself in new cities with new perspectives. Baum’s life, then, is the American Dream personified, a “rags to riches to rags to riches” story. The mixture of historical, cultural, social, and economic changes in America and the effects of the change from an agrarian to an industrial society are all reflected in Baum’s works. Leach notes, “By the late 1890s, Baum’s mind was literally saturated in the dream-production and fantasy of a new cultural experience” (24). His own personal experiences and his love for entrepreneurial endeavors, theater, writing, children, all play into the creation of Oz.

By Baum’s own indications, he set out to create a modern-day fairy tale. However, due to the cultural circumstances in which he wrote, he wound up with a uniquely American fairy tale, now legendary in its status and legacy. The introduction to the book describes his desire to create such a fairy tale for children:

The old-time fairy tale, having served for generations, may now be classed as “historical” in the children’s library; for the time has come for a series of newer “wonder tales” in which the stereotyped genie, dwarf and fairy are eliminated, together with all the horrible and bloodcurdling incident devised by their authors to point to a fearsome moral to each tale. Modern
education includes morality; therefore the modern child seeks only entertainment in its wonder-tales and gladly dispenses with all disagreeable incident.

Having this thought in mind, the story of “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” was written solely to pleasure children of today. It aspires to be a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heartaches and nightmares are left out.  

Whether or not Baum succeeded in removing “morals” and the “heartaches and nightmares,” leaving simply entertainment is certainly cause for debate; however, the tale cast its spell on readers, young and old alike. Part of the magic came in the book’s illustrations by William Wallace Denslow. The lush pictures broke boundaries of the page and written text. They were colorful pieces that seemed to transcend the typeface itself and create a whole new world of wonder. As Book News reported in 1900, “the illustrations have live action, and humor.”  

Young loved the rich imagery (both in illustrations and through words), old loved the philosophy, and Oz proved to be the best selling children’s book for Christmas in the year 1900 (Swartz 18).

Even critics reviewing the book predicted its mass appeal: the October 1900 issue of Book News quoted a Philadelphia newspaper review that “It is not lacking in philosophy and satire which will furnish amusement to the adult and cause the juvenile to think some new and healthy thoughts.”  

On September 8, 1900, The New York Times published what was perhaps the most significant review of Baum’s story:

In “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” the fact is clearly recognized that the young as well as their elders love novelty. They are pleased with dashes of color and something new in the place of the old, familiar, and winged fairies of Grimm and Anderson.…

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14 Swartz 10, quoting L. Frank Baum, The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (Chicago: George M. Hill, 1900).
16 Ibid 34.
The story has humor and here and there stray bits of philosophy that will be a moving power on the child mind and will furnish fields of study and investigation for the future students and professors of psychology.\(^{17}\)

The review predicts the power of the story and the future of interpretations that transcend entertainment for the young, and reaching philosophy for the old. The review also agrees with Baum’s inclinations toward creating a new fairy-tale. By taking everyday objects and occurrences and including them within the text as recognizable characters and situations, Baum created events that children and adults alike could relate to, rather than harkening back to days long gone. He created a contemporary fairy-tale, with meaning and relevance to its readers.

Reflecting on Barrett’s indications of American readiness for a new fairy tale, Zipes believed \textit{Oz} is “our endeavor to recapture promises of the past and fulfill them by making our mark in the present…It is the measure of hope, a secular force of humanitarian hope” (119). Leach echoed this point, stating \textit{The Wonderful Wizard of Oz} met the needs of a blossoming society:

\[\ldots\text{[Oz] was a fine fairy tale full of interesting characters and facts taken from American life and instantly recognizable to most Americans}[\text{[it also] met—almost perfectly—the particular ethical and emotional needs of people living in a new urban, industrial society…The book both reflected and helped create a new cultural consciousness—a new way of seeing and being in harmony with the new industrial order. (1-2)\]

The “ethical and emotional needs” that Leach mentioned harken back to the original purpose of traditional fairy tales. Though there are different needs for different times, the result, as Barrett and Leach explain, is the creation of a purely American fairy tale that served as a cultural artifact and/or identifier in a constantly changing and evolving climate. As early as 1929, Wagenknecht observed, “Baum taught American children to look for wonder in the life around them, to realize even smoke and machinery may be transformed into fairy lore if only we have sufficient energy and vision to penetrate to their significance and transform them to our use.”\(^{18}\)

\(^{17}\) Ibid 35.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid 39.  (Quoting Dr. Edward Wagenknecht’s 1929 University of Washington chapbook called \textit{Utopia Americana}. )
Since the late nineteenth century was important in forging a national identity that sought to look towards the future, Baum’s book contained elements of American life readily available to both young and old. And, as Earle observed, “it is precisely because the book is open to so many interpretations that it has so fascinated the public and enjoyed such longevity” (as quoted in Swartz 22). Thus, from feminist to Populist interpretations, the tale is a tale that from its very beginning defied and transcended the boundaries of time, space, and age, a defiance and transcendence that spilled over into the magical 1939 screen adaptation starring Judy Garland as “Dorothy.”

Pressured by fans to write another book about the fictional Land of Oz, Baum embarked on a series that would continue well after his own death. Other writers eventually sought permission to continue the series in the same Ozian vein. Ruth Plumly Thompson picked up the series and continued it until 1939. Though her series was different than Baum’s vision, the books were widely accepted as the continuation of the series.\(^{19}\) John R. Neill, Jack Snow, Rachel R. Cosgrove, Eloise Jarvis McGraw and Lauren McGraw Warner also contributed to the series.\(^{20}\)

Separate from fan pressure to continue the series of children’s books, the original *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* spawned a board game in 1921, dolls in 1924, and even a display at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1933 (Swartz 2). Dramatizations began as early as 1902, not unexpected given the widespread love for the story combined with Baum’s own love for the stage.

In 1902 Baum created a “fairly straightforward” adaptation of his story for the stage, but at the hands of producer Fred Hamilton and stage director Julian Mitchell, the play became “instead a vile, gorgeously mounted comic opera, brimming with vaudeville turns and unrelated songs and performers” (Fricke 3). The stage adaptation toured eight years across the northeast United States and Canada, and spent two full seasons on Broadway (Earle 2). The success of the play seemed due to the vaudeville team of David C. Montgomery and Fred A. Stone, who appeared as the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow, respectively (Fricke 3). With the success of the play, the emergence of the film industry, and Baum’s own embracing of technological advancements, it seemed only natural that the story would make the jump onto the big screen.

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\(^{20}\) Ibid.
In 1910, just as the silent film industry was skyrocketing, Otis Turner took a stab at adapting the Baum book for the emerging medium. Apparently based more on the 1902 stage adaptation than the actual novel\(^{21}\), this thirteen-minute film starred Bebe Daniels as “Dorothy Gale,” and Robert Z. Leonard as “the Scarecrow.” The Selig Polyscope Company, a pioneer of the silent film era and the first permanent film studio in the Los Angeles area\(^{22}\), produced the film.\(^{23}\)

This whimsical short film deviates from the actual novel, despite recognizable characters such as Dorothy, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion. In this tale, The Wicked Witch is named “Momba,” and she lives in a hut, rather than a castle. Toto becomes a bulldog, and, due to the magic of Glinda, is much more of an actual protector than in the book and 1939 classic film. Though the story includes many differences from both the novel and the 1939 film starring Judy Garland, there are elements from this silent version that reappear in the latter film: lots of song and dance, the linking of arms between the main characters as they dance down the yellow brick road, and the Scarecrow grabbing the Lion’s tail. Music and dance are a great part of this silent film, and though the plot deviations are plenty, references that would later appear in the classic version are also clear.

Fifteen years later, after Turner’s 1910 silent film, Larry Semon brought the story back to the big screen. With Dorothy Dwan as “Dorothy” and Oliver Hardy as “Farmhand/Tin Woodsman/Knight of the Garter,” this film reached nearly ninety minutes in length.\(^{24}\) With no witches in the film at all, it is more of a vaudeville act between the Tin Man (Oliver Hardy), the Scarecrow (Larry Semon), and the Cowardly Lion (Spencer Bell). There is no Toto, no Yellow Brick Road, no Emerald City, and Uncle Henry plays a much larger role in the film as a domineering father figure. Though elements of the original story are present, they are used only as a vehicle for the slapstick and vaudevillian escapades of the three farmhands, with the bumbling Wizard (Charles Murray) added for additional humor and plot measures. Dorothy’s role is minimized to the point of simply being one whose love and affection is desired, and the characters portrayed by Hardy, Semon, and Bryant Washburn (as Prince Kynd) fawn and fight over her. (Ultimately, Prince Kynd wins her love.) The film also exhibits clichés of the silent

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\(^{21}\) See imdb.com, “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1910).”


\(^{23}\) This was the second time the studio dipped its hands into Oz, for the company had produced several short motion pictures for inclusion in Baum’s 1908 Fairylogue and Radio-Plays tour (Swartz 2).

\(^{24}\) See imdb.com, “The Wizard of Oz (1925).”
Film era: Zorro look-alikes as villains, Dorothy as a damsel-in-distress tied to a water tower, and elements of swashbuckling, though small they may be.

Despite the obvious slapstick nature of the film, elements of this 1925 version are used again in the 1939 film version. Semon’s film opens with an introduction reminiscent of the introduction in the 1939 version:

Dedication: In the lexicon of life there is no sweeter word than Childhood, its books and its memories, and to bring back THOSE memories and add, mayhap, a smile or two in purely entertainment is my desire. Larry Semon.

Semon’s dedication relates the film to childhood, transporting the audience into the nostalgic whims of adolescence. The 1939 film version also calls to attention the “young at heart,” acknowledging the carefree notions of childhood and placing the audience in the same frame of mind.

Other elements of Semon’s adaptation also made the jump to the 1939 film version. Though not as slapstick or obvious as in the 1925 film, humor is quite evident in the later film. The appearance and clothing of Aunt Em seem nearly replicated in the later film, and though she plays hardly any significance in the earlier film, her presence as Dorothy’s mother figure is announced via plain text. The back story given to Dorothy in the earlier version is that of a princess dropped on the doorstep of Uncle Henry and Aunt Em; however, one title card alludes to the sense of longing and the need for self-discovery on which the later film built its story: “All of which made Dorothy more anxious than ever to learn who she really was.” In 1925, she was a princess, taken from Oz, with no history. In 1939, she’s a lonely girl looking for a place in the world. The sense of self-discovery transfers to the later film, despite the differences in placement, characterization, and character usage.

The tornado blows nearly everyone from Kansas to the Land of Oz. In 1925, Dorothy made it to the storm shelter, which was more of a shack than a cellar. The shack is seen blowing around in the tornado, much like the house flying through the air in 1939. Another important similarity between the two films is the dual roles of the farmhands as the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, but in 1925, the farmhands assumed the roles in an effort to hide from Prime Minister Kruel. The stiffness of Oliver Hardy as he emerges as the Tin Man remains in the Tin Man of 1939, and the clumsiness and awkwardness of Semon’s Scarecrow simply become a part
of that particular character, adopted and imitated by Ray Bolger. The Lion of 1925 is certainly afraid, and in one scene he runs away in a humorous fashion, perhaps the predecessor to Bert Lahr’s Lion running away from the Wizard in sheer terror. Also, as in the 1910 silent version, there is a scene in which the Scarecrow holds onto the Lion’s tail, an element, albeit small, that is also present in the later adaptation.

Between the 1910 film version and the 1939 version, there were other films that visited the Land of Oz\(^\text{25}\), but the 1910 and 1925 versions are the only live-action films that call upon the exact title of Baum’s original book.

Concurrently, amateur theater groups began performing adaptations of *The Wizard of Oz* by the late 1920s, and in 1928, playwright Elizabeth Fuller Goodspeed published an adaptation of the story for the growing children’s theater market (Swartz 2). Ellen Van Volkenburg, a founder of the Cornish Players of Seattle, was one of the first to adapt and perform the story using marionettes. According to Swartz, the marionette adaptation was quite faithful to the original story, toured many parts of the country, and remained a staple of the Cornish Players of Seattle through the 1930s (2). An animated motion picture appeared in 1933, and a Wizard of Oz radio show aired on NBC three times a week from September 25, 1933 until March 23, 1934 (Swartz 2).

The continuous successful stage, screen, and radio adaptations serve to illustrate that Americans were already enthralled with the story; at the outset, the now classic 1939 screen adaptation seemed simply another in a long line of interpretations and adaptations. However, it is fitting to examine the earlier material, simply because, as Swartz says:

> They were the source and inspiration for, among other things, using the musical-comedy format to present Dorothy’s journey, for adding the Kansas farm hands to the story… and for turning Dorothy’s adventures into a dream. (3)

The earlier works influenced the 1939 film, and it was as if these earlier works were simply practice for the creation of the now legendary film starring Judy Garland.

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\(^{25}\) *The Magic Cloak of Oz* (1914), *His Majesty, the Scarecrow of Oz* (1914), and a 1933 cartoon version called *The Wizard of Oz*. 

29
1939’s *The Wizard of Oz*

By today’s Hollywood standards, *The Wizard of Oz* had all the industry snafus that would earmark it as a disaster. Four different directors, casting squabbles, and scheduling competition from films that would eventually also be considered classics plagued the film from the very beginning. After the 1925 film version, L. Frank Baum aggressively shopped the rights to the story to Hollywood studios as early as 1927 (Hearn 3). Though Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer had shown interest in 1924 when Baum eventually sold the rights to Chadwick Pictures, it wasn’t until 1938 that MGM gained the rights to the film (Hearn 2-5). Script doctoring, however, began well before MGM earned the rights. Though only three receive screen credit for the film, twelve script “doctors” had their hands in the evolution of the adaptation, not including the song writing team of Harold Arlen and Edgar “Yip” Harburg. Though in the factory system of the film industry it was not uncommon for multiple writers to work on a project, twelve writers on one project was almost unheard of.26

Adapting Baum’s script for the MGM film version was not the least of the problems plaguing the creation of the film. Though Victor Fleming received screen credit, a total of four directors worked on the film: Richard Thorpe, George Cukor, Fleming, and King Vidor (Fricke). Casting also became a problem. MGM underwent negotiations with Fox to secure proven box-office star Shirley Temple as “Dorothy;” however, Arthur Freed and Mervin LeRoy consistently campaigned for the then-rising star, Judy Garland, to assume the lead role. Fox turned down MGM’s request, and though legend has it other actresses were considered before Garland secured the role, it is difficult to picture someone other than Garland in the role (Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman 19-20).

The role of Dorothy wasn’t the only character to undergo casting issues. Originally, Gale Sondergaard was cast as the Wicked Witch (Fricke et al 24), a character initially modeled after the Evil Queen in Disney’s *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*: “decidedly evil and sinister—but frightenly beautiful” (Fricke et al 14). When the angle of the Witch changed from evil yet glamorous to evil and ugly, Margaret Hamilton replaced Sondergaard (Fricke et al 61). Buddy Ebsen was also originally cast as the “Hickory/Tin Man,” but an allergic reaction to the metallic

makeup required MGM to replace him with Jack Haley (Fricke et al 63, 78). Rounding out the primary cast were Frank Morgan as the “Wizard of Oz” and “Professor Marvel,” Ray Bolger as “Hunk/The Scarecrow,” Bert Lahr as “Zeke/The Cowardly Lion,” Billie Burke as “Glinda, the Good Witch of the North,” Charley Grapewin as “Uncle Henry,” and Clara Blandick as “Auntie Em.”

Elaborate costumes and sets were designed for the production, with extensive application procedures and inherent hazards. Aside from Ebsen’s allergic reaction to his metallic makeup, Bert Lahr carried fifty pounds of real lion skins lined with heavy padding that required both the actor and his costume to be blasted with air from blow dryers. The purpose was to cool Lahr down from carrying so much bulk and also to make the costume ready for the next shot (Fricke et al 51, 84). Haley suffered from an eye infection that kept him off set and in a darkened room for days, and Margaret Hamilton suffered a green tint to her skin for weeks after shooting closed (83).

The green tint was the least of Hamilton’s worries. During a take of the Wicked Witch’s escape from Munchkinland, Hamilton was severely injured when the special effects of her exit were set off too early. Her hat, broom, and hair caught fire, and she was badly burned. To make matters worse, Hamilton’s green makeup was toxic, and the alcohol needed to clean her face caused great additional pain. As a result, she was away from the set for nearly three months (Fricke et al 101).

At one point, MGM decided all the delays and problems weren’t worth the effort of production and decided to close the film down. LeRoy argued in Oz’s favor, and the studio reluctantly relented. Fricke, Scarfone, and Stillman attribute a happy-go-lucky, enthusiastic, and dedicated atmosphere on the set of Oz to seeing the cast and crew through the many changes and setbacks (85-86).

There were a number of changes from Baum’s original text in this film version; most notably, Glinda became the Good Witch of the North instead of the Good Witch of the South, and the Silver Shoes become Dorothy’s infamous Ruby Slippers, but, as Hearn noted, “the film is faithful to the spirit and plot of Baum’s book.”27 The combination of the chemistry between the cast and crew, the elaborate sets, costuming, makeup, special effects ahead of their time, and

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the magic of the Technicolor Oz as juxtaposed against the sepia tones of Kansas reflecting its 
grayness proved to be the right ingredients for the magic elixir of this fantasy film. When the 
music written by Arlen and Harburg was added and the final decision was made to remove the 
“Jitterbug” number and keep the now legendary “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” The Wizard of 
Oz was complete.

There are conflicting reports as to whether or not the film actually did well in its original 
theatrical release. Parish and Pitts claim that the film’s budget was $3,700,000 and grossed only 
$3,017,000 in the theaters (764). That latter figure is repeated by Fricke, et al, but is 
accompanied by the claim that the film set record attendance. The book’s authors state the 
reason that record attendance did not set record gross was that children comprised at least one-
third of those in attendance at the film, and the cost of admission for a child was less that of an 
adult. Fricke et al also claim that, although the film was popular enough for theaters to extend its 
run, 1939 was such a powerhouse year for film that The Wizard of Oz simply had to move on in 
order to make room for incoming releases (169-170). With stiff competition from films like 
Gone With the Wind, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Love 
Affair, Of Mice and Men, and The Women (Film History), box office receipts were shared among 
the plethora of offerings. The documentary Because of the Wonderful Things it Does: The 
Legacy of Oz claims “it was television that catapulted it over the top.”

On November 3, 1956, fifty-six years after L. Frank Baum published his original tale and 
seventeen years after the film first appeared in theaters, CBS debuted The Wizard of Oz on 
national television (Fricke et al 215). It was hosted by Bert Lahr and featured an appearance by 
Garland’s ten-year-old daughter Liza Minnelli. The second television showing in 1959 began a 
long-standing tradition of airing the movie every year (216). By the time The Wizard of Oz 
reached millions of viewers every year on television, the magic of the story was already a 
generational affair. Parents, grandparents, and children could share in the tale together, unified 
across the land by less than two hours of a television broadcast. According to Hearn, Baum 
allowed children to dream, and it is the 1939 film adaptation that allowed children, parents, and 
grandparents to dream together, to remember days of simplicity, and to dream of their own land 
beyond the rainbow (L. Frank Baum: The Man Behind the Curtain).

The importance and lasting effect of The Wizard of Oz, in particular, the 1939 adaptation 
of the story, further illustrates the timelessness of the story and film. With the rich history
surrounding the creation and longevity of the film, several of the more well-known explorations of and deviations from the story are worthy of mentioning, simply to demonstrate the popularity and pervasiveness of the film and its worthiness for continued study. As Fricke notes, “When a story and characters are as familiar as *The Wizard of Oz* has become, all of a sudden it’s open to all kinds of interpretations…It’s almost impossible to watch television for a week and not hear an *Oz* reference, a paraphrase of *Oz* dialogue…” (*Because of the Wonderful Things it Does*). Glassman added, “With the book and the movie, they’ve both become so ingrained in the American psyche that *The Wizard of Oz* has become the children’s story by which America identifies itself.” This century-plus year-old tale, with a life entrenched in rich, American history, continues to transcend time and space. Among the reinterpretations and readaptations are *The Wiz*, an attempt to adapt the themes into an urban and African American setting, mentions in popular music including the experimental nature of setting Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon* to the film, and *Wicked*, a widely popular novel by Gregory Maguire and a smash success on Broadway that focuses on the Wicked Witch of the West and the nature of “evil.”

**Plot Synopsis and Oz as Myth**

*The Wizard of Oz* follows the principles of a mythological journey; however, as Voytilla notes, the steps he provides are merely a guide. Voytilla builds off Campbell’s work, including *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, in which the title of the book itself suggests how the basic protagonist of the mythic story takes on many different forms.

Just as *The Wizard of Oz* is an American fairy tale, it is also an American myth. Across media, the basic structure of the mythological tale remains. That basic mythic structure has been outlined in chapter one; however, as Voytilla notes, the configuration is loose:

…the Hero’s Journey provides a flexible and adaptable model with the potential for an infinite variety of shapes and progressions of Stages. The Journey’s Stages may be avoided, repeated, or shifted about depending on the needs of the individual story. (5)

As much as Voytilla suggests the individual story shifts the actual stages of the mythological journey, interpretations of particular artifacts also can provide an outlet for shifts in the

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28 See Chapter I.
application of the stages. This particular breakdown is subjective; however, it is necessary to delve into it briefly in order that the concepts may be applied later in the analysis. The following plot analysis therefore employs Voytilla’s concepts as previously mentioned in Chapter 1.

The film opens with the “Ordinary World,” or the world in which the audience learns about the protagonist of the film and identifies with the central problem. After the opening credit and title sequence, *The Wizard of Oz* begins by immediately calling attention to Dorothy and giving the audience a glimpse into her problems.

*The Wizard of Oz* opens in sepia-toned Kansas with Dorothy and Toto running away from an unseen terror. As they approach the farm and Dorothy attempts to confide in Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, they brush her off because their chick incubator is broken. As Dorothy walks away, she comes across Zeke, Hunk, and Hickory, the farmhands. Initially, they brush her off as well; however, each of them brings to light a different value that will resurface in their Oz counterparts. When Aunt Em reenters the segment, Dorothy turns to tell her of her troubles with Miss Gulch, only to be brushed off again. Aunt Em tells Dorothy to “find yourself a place where you won’t get into any trouble” (Langley et al 39). Dorothy wonders if there is such a place. Though not as antagonistic as her relationship with Miss Gulch, her farm life leaves her much to be desired. It is here that the audience establishes an identification with the heroine and her troubles—a misunderstood adolescent out of time and out of place.

After Dorothy sings her signature song “Over the Rainbow,” Miss Gulch enters and contributes to Dorothy’s problems that eventually lead to the “Call to Adventure.” Miss Gulch appears on the family farm, states her claims regarding Toto, and demands that Toto be turned over to her.

When Miss Gulch removes Toto from the Gale farm and Toto returns to Dorothy, Dorothy makes the decision to run away. This is the second step, the “Call to Adventure.” Dorothy recognizes her own power to make a change, and though adolescent in her choice, she runs away with Toto.

Dorothy’s meeting with Professor Marvel represents the “Refusal of the Call,” in which the heroine is faced with insecurities and questions the purpose of her journey. Clearly a fraud, the kindly old man simply comments on Aunt Em’s health and Dorothy realizes that she made an impetuous decision. By telling Dorothy that her Aunt Em was worrying about her and perhaps
even near death, Professor Marvel convinces the adolescent to hurry home to her possibly ailing Aunt Em. As she and Toto run home, the storm approaches.

“Crossing the Threshold” is the line that separates the Ordinary World from the “Special World,” demonstrating a commitment on the part of the protagonist to the journey. In *Oz*, crossing the threshold comes, quite literally, when a tornado rolls though Kansas and sweeps the house into the air, depositing it in Munchkinland, Dorothy’s initiation into the special world. The audience is also swept away into the special world, due to the switch from the dull sepia-tones used in filming the Kansas segments into the use of vibrant Technicolor.

When Dorothy’s house lands in Munchkinland and she opens the door, there is a sharp contrast between the interior of the house, which has remained sepia-toned, and what is outside the house, which is in Technicolor. As she walks through the door and into the lush land, her commitment to the journey is complete. She has crossed the threshold and literally entered into the Special World. She recognizes it, and through their initial hiding and questioning, the inhabitants of this Special World also recognize that she is not someone who is usually present in the world.

The shift between “Crossing the Threshold” and “Meeting the Mentor” is the first step that breaks away from the original structure Voytilla articulates; however, this segment marks the beginning of a crucial segment for this analysis. Within these scenes, Dorothy “Meets the Mentor” and is introduced to an enemy. The Mentor in *The Wizard of Oz* is, arguably, Glinda. Glinda gives Dorothy the confidence she needs to continue on her journey. She is the guide that sends Dorothy along the Yellow Brick Road to meet the Wizard, who is seemingly the only person who is able to return Dorothy and Toto to Kansas. She warns Dorothy about the Wicked Witch and her powers, and even instills a modicum of fear in Dorothy regarding the Witch, reinforcing the fear Dorothy had already felt at the arrival of the Wicked Witch: “The sooner you get out of Oz altogether, the safer you’ll sleep my dear” (Langley et al 62). It is this combination of confidence and fear that pushes Dorothy towards the actual start of her journey and reinforces her desire to return home. Thus, “Meeting the Mentor” convinces Dorothy of the need to see the journey through until the end.

After Glinda appears to Dorothy and explains who she is and who the Munchkins are, the Munchkins celebrate the death of the Wicked Witch of the East and honor Dorothy as their liberator. In the midst of their song and dance, the Wicked Witch of the West appears in an
explosion of red smoke and confronts the inhabitants of the land about the death of her sister. Glinda places the Witch’s coveted Ruby Slippers on Dorothy’s feet, verbal bantering ensues between the two witches, and before leaving in another fiery burst of smoke, the Wicked Witch threatens Dorothy. Glinda prods the Munchkins to come from their hiding and tells Dorothy that she’s “made a rather bad enemy of the Wicked Witch of the West” (Langley et al 62). The mentor is made and the enemy is clear.

After Glinda points Dorothy in the direction of the Emerald City and the Munchkins see her to the border of Munchkinland, Dorothy sets out on her journey along the Yellow Brick Road. Dorothy meets with “Tests, Allies, and Enemies.” She realizes that life in this world is not limited to (apparent) human beings, and that even scarecrows, tin woodsmen, and lions can be animated and full of life. The Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, with Dorothy and Toto, forge the “Hero Team” (to use Voytilla’s term). The five of them carry on to face the Wizard of Oz together in search of what they desire most: a brain, a heart, courage, and a home. The five of them encounter dangers put into place by the Wicked Witch and face them together along their journey. Helpmates are found and trials are fought on their way to the Emerald City to see the Wizard.

After having met with her friends, the Wicked Witch attempts to stop the Hero Team from reaching the Emerald City by drugging them to sleep with poppies: “Poppies will put them to sleep” (Langley et al 82). Dorothy, Toto, and the Lion fall asleep. Glinda answers the Tin Man and Scarecrow’s calls for help by making it snow, thus waking the three yet rusting the Tin Man. Once the team applies the appropriate amount of oil to the Tin Man’s joints, they race off towards Emerald City. Dorothy has met her friends and faced her foe and can now approach the inmost cave.

The “Approach to the Inmost Cave” is the moment of preparation that leads to the central Ordeal. This approach is both the preparations in Emerald City to meet the Wizard for the first time and the actual meeting of the Wizard when the floating head tells them to return once they have brought him the Witch’s broomstick. The Hero’s work is not finished, and the final ordeal is revealed.

As Dorothy, Toto, Scarecrow, Tin Man and Cowardly Lion leave the Emerald City in search of the Wicked Witch’s broomstick, the central Ordeal that they must overcome truly begins. Having been heckled by the Wicked Witch all along the journey, they find themselves
walking right up to the Castle in the hopes of claiming her broomstick. They arm themselves: the Scarecrow carries a water gun and a stick, the Tin Man carries a wrench, and the Lion carries a net and a spray pump labeled “Witch Remover.” Dorothy carries nothing. Though afraid, it is their determination to receive that which they seek that is the driving force behind overcoming their fear.

The Wicked Witch sends her flying monkeys to fetch Dorothy and Toto. After recuperating from the successful attack, the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion head to the Castle to save Dorothy and Toto. While in the Castle, Dorothy attempts to assuage the Wicked Witch by giving her the Ruby Slippers; the Wicked Witch realizes that she cannot remove the Ruby Slippers from Dorothy’s feet while Dorothy is alive, so she uses an hourglass to determine how long Dorothy will ultimately live. She then leaves Dorothy to contemplate her fate. Alone, Dorothy sees Aunt Em in the Witch’s crystal ball and cries to her that she is frightened. The Wicked Witch mocks her.

It is ultimately the helpmates’ desire to save Dorothy from the clutches of the Wicked Witch that allows the Hero Team to complete their task. They rescue Dorothy like a damsel in distress; after a chase through the Castle, she melts the Witch, frees the Witch’s personal guards known as the Winkies and claims the broomstick, which is the “Reward.” The Hero Team returns to Emerald City with the broomstick and Toto exposes the Wizard as a fraud. The Wizard, however, points out that the Hero Team already had the values they sought all along. This knowledge is also part of the reward, despite the lack of a trinket for Dorothy in his black bag.

The Wizard decides to take Dorothy back to Kansas in a balloon and then tells his story about how he arrived in Oz. Dorothy says her goodbyes to her friends. Just before the balloon lifts off, Toto jumps out of Dorothy’s arms and chases a cat. Dorothy runs and follows Toto and the Wizard, who cannot control the balloon, flies away without Dorothy and Toto. This marks the beginning of “The Road Back.”

The “Road Back” is Dorothy’s journey back to Kansas. After the Wizard unwittingly leaves Dorothy behind in Oz, Dorothy confronts her distress at potentially having to stay in Oz. Glinda appears and tells her she has always had the power to return home, that she just had to learn for herself where and what her home truly means to her. Dorothy realizes that everything
she ever truly wanted is in her own backyard, and thus speaks the knowledge that gives her the power to return home. As Glinda says, “She had to learn it for herself” (Langley et al 128).

“Learning it for herself” is evidence of the “Resurrection.” It is Dorothy’s brief acknowledgement that is wasn’t enough for her to simply just want to see her family again. It is the acknowledgement that her heart’s desire rests in her own backyard. It is the knowledge and power she gained on the journey that she takes with her back to the Ordinary World and this knowledge and power that allows her to return to the Ordinary World.

The final step is that the heroine “Returns with the Elixir.” After clicking her heels together three times while wearing the Ruby Slippers, Dorothy wakes up in the Ordinary World surrounded by her family and friends. She acknowledges her place in the home once again, thanks to the elixir of knowledge: “I’m not going to leave here ever, ever again, because I love you all!” (Langley et al 132). The final reward for Dorothy is the return to Kansas and the knowledge that there really is “no place like home.”
CHAPTER III

Theoretical Underpinnings

The importance of examining a text such as 1939’s *Wizard of Oz* beyond the surface themes resides in its mythic and fairy tale qualities and its subsequent immersion into the very fabric of American culture. Myths and fairy tales, as Zipes notes, are nearly interchangeable terms representing the stories society creates that carry the values of that society, then disguises them as if the tales were not of that particular society. He echoes Barthes in that a “myth is a collective representation that is socially determined and then inverted so as not to appear as a cultural artefact (sic)” (6). Baum’s story became the dominant American cultural fairy tale simply because it reflected the values of American society—it is the society that spawned it and the society that readily and eagerly consumed it.

The story, which was established as a fairy tale in the previous chapter, rises to a new level of cultural indoctrination with the 1939 film adaptation. Easily accessible to a mass audience and repeatedly seen year after year on television in the comfort of the home, the fairy tale has blossomed into a family event and, consequently, even more of a cultural event. The tale has evolved from a marker of social identification to an artifact of American identity. It is, as Zipes says, “harmless, natural, eternal, ahistorical, therapeutic” (7). The cross-genre, cross-generational appeal of the film allows it to be ahistorical; its only history rests in the tradition of telling the tale year after year. It appears to be archetypal, eternal, and timeless because the values it espouses—values of home, family, friendship and belonging—are timeless values consistent with the values of society.

However, these values are not the only values represented in society, nor in the film. A patriarchal ideology emerges as an underlying subtext of the film once the representations present within *The Wizard of Oz* are examined on a deeper level. Hence, an ideological analysis and deconstruction of the segments within the film, within the context of the woman’s film as defined by Basinger and other supporting documents within the context of the woman’s film, is necessary in order to more fully comprehend this subtext.

This deconstruction and analysis of *The Wizard of Oz* is ideological in nature, for it is the ideological examination that calls attention to one of the main characteristics of fairy tales in the
first place: a socially determined collective representation that carries the values of the dominant society. Ideology is, as Heck has observed, “a level of deep structure, which is ‘invisible’ and ‘unconscious,’ which continually structures our immediate conscious perceptions…” (122). It is then these “invisible” and “unconscious” understandings that also serve to create fairy tales.

Heck’s “deep structure” that is “invisible” and “unconscious” also includes simple, everyday language. Hence, given the stereotypical gender roles inherent in the language of everyday society, Brouwer argues:

> Even though the social roles of women and men have changed enormously, stereotypical views and ideas about women and men continue to exist. They still haunt our minds and, often without our being aware of it, influence our attitudes towards the emancipation of women and men.

(44)

The very ideology of patriarchy is imbedded in everyday language, coded and decoded more often than not without a second thought as to the origins and implications of the language. Beyond that, however, is the notion that these views and ideas about gender roles continue to remain in society, regardless of their evolution. This provides another reason for studying the underlying messages of such an iconic text like *The Wizard of Oz*.

In decoding the ideology then, Heck continues: “When a message is emitted it is not only what is said that has significance but also the way it is said, and what is not said but could be said…” (124). In decoding the language of the script and the images present in segments within the film then, a deconstruction of the ideology present is possible. Walters calls for the need for a “signification paradigm” when analyzing images of women: “The question becomes not so much what…images are produced, but how they are produced and come to have meaning for us” (47). The result is a need to look beyond the overriding themes of *The Wizard of Oz* and into the coding of why the characters are represented the way they are and how they are represented that determines their obvious or indicated nature. By placing *The Wizard of Oz* within the context of the woman’s film, methods of deconstruction allow the critic to study one of the myriad messages residing in the film that is often ignored or overlooked because of the grand fairy tale scale and values associated with such an iconic film.
The male gaze (as mentioned in Chapter 1) is present simply because language, images, and the act of being have been determined by the male-dominant society. Everything is coded by this society. According to Mulvey:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance…The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. (48)

Women are therefore defined by how they appear to men. In a world that has been historically defined and redefined by a patriarchal society, the appearance and actions of a woman are defined by the manner(s) in which she appeals to men. Even women define themselves as such, having been encoded with patriarchal inequalities since birth.

Berger says much the same thing:

She [a woman] has to survey everything she is and everything she does because how she appears to others, and ultimately how she appears to men, is of crucial importance for what is normally thought of as the success of her life…Consequently how a woman appears to a man can determine how she will be treated. (37)

The different approaches Mulvey and Berger use to reach the same conclusions validate the need for an ideological examination of the social codes present in a film such as The Wizard of Oz.

In understanding the idea of the “male gaze,” it is easier to separate oneself from the gaze and deconstruct the signs that ultimately create those particular meanings in such a society. Kaplan notes that, in the case of a woman,

… she is presented as what she represents for man, not in terms of what she actually signifies. Her discourse (her meanings, as she might produce them) is suppressed in favor of a discourse structured by patriarchy in which her real signification has been replaced by connotations that serve patriarchy’s needs. (18)

The ideological deconstruction of images takes into account the patriarchal society in which we live. As mentioned in Chapter One, these concepts help justify the use of Basinger’s schemata, and it is with these concepts in mind that the analysis of The Wizard of Oz will operate.
Oz as a Woman’s Film

_The Wizard of Oz_ spans multiple genres of film, including drama, musical, and fantasy; however, the film also fits under the umbrella term “woman’s film” as defined by Basinger. As previously indicated, Basinger defined the woman’s film as:

…a movie that places at the center of its universe a female who is trying to deal with the emotional, social, and psychological problems that are specifically connected to the fact that she is a woman. (20)

It is precisely the “male gaze” that places _The Wizard of Oz_ under this umbrella term because Dorothy is a female at the center of the _Oz_ universe attempting to deal with and negotiate between the examples set by Glinda the Good Witch and the Wicked Witch of the West. When viewed through the lens provided by the male gaze, the witches are more than good or bad; they are representations of good women and bad women.

Berger seems to disagree with applying the idea of the woman’s film to _Oz_, arguing, “men act and women appear” (38). It is this appearance that determines the course of action for the film—often the woman’s action is that of making herself prettier and/or more appealing to men, and that is the crux of the film.29 However, Basinger does not limit the woman’s film to “prettying up.” “movies about women were two-faced, providing viewers with escape, freedom, release, and then telling them that they shouldn’t want such things; they won’t work; they ‘re all wrong” (23). A woman’s film does not necessarily have to be about a woman prettying up. It can be about escape and release, but the end of the film must inevitably show why that escape and that action and that release are problematic or unacceptable behavior for women.

Throughout the production heyday of Hollywood films, any strong female character that acted outside the traditional gender roles for women eventually wound up perfectly happy relinquishing her independence upon finding those roles30, punished31, or otherwise dead32. As

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29 See Bette Davis’ character “Charlotte Vale” in 1942s _Now, Voyager_, in which the action of the film revolves around Charlotte’s “prettying up” in order to win love and acceptance in the eyes of society, in the eyes of a patriarchal society. See also Audrey Hepburn in _My Fair Lady_ (1964). Both women are only allowed love and acceptance after they have “prettied up” their images.

30 See, for example, the character of “Clarissa” in 1939’s _Mr. Smith Goes to Washington_, who in the end relinquishes her own independence upon realizing she is in love with “Jefferson” (Jimmy Stewart).

31 In 1945’s _Mildred Pierce_, the title character played by Joan Crawford strikes it rich, only to have her own independence as the catalyst for her eventual downfall.

Basinger argues, “The woman’s film rule book of behavior tells women to be good or else. To accept their jobs as women or else” (55). Hence, the woman’s film, if freedom and independence from their job of appealing to men is allowed, shows, in the end, either punishment for behavior or reward for changing that behavior.

Another point of resolution between Berger and Oz is the fact that Dorothy is an adolescent. In terms of the woman’s film then, as an adolescent, Dorothy is allowed to act rather than simply appear because is not yet a woman. She is still learning her role. Despite the seemingly independent actions of Dorothy, the adolescent aspects of the journey allow the film to still fit Basinger’s definition: it is about teaching Dorothy the rules of society, of showing her the extremes and what happens if she follows certain paths. In this manner, though Dorothy is still the protagonist and heroine of the film, it is this adolescent behavior and context that liberates her from the typical protagonist role(s) of the woman’s film. Instead of prettying herself up, the film is about learning that she must eventually pretty herself up.

Kuhn emphasizes the recuperative quality of women in films. Though she neither acknowledges the genre “woman’s film” nor denies it, Kuhn’s work is useful because she highlights the same trends Basinger and Haskell mention:

There seems…to be a tendency on the part of the classic Hollywood narrative to recuperate women. Moreover, it is often woman—as structure, character, or both—who constitutes the motivator of the narrative, the ‘trouble’ that sets the plot into motion…woman may thus have to be returned to her place so that order is restored to the world. (34)

Kuhn uses 1945’s Mildred Pierce as her example, but the recuperative quality of The Wizard of Oz is obvious because Dorothy’s journey occurs in a dream state. Though it is her desire, and therefore the catalyst for the dream, to run away from home, in this dream, the Wicked Witch is melted and Glinda remains happy. The bad is punished and the good are rewarded. When the dream closes and Dorothy returns home, although she insists Oz was real, she repeats her mantra “there’s no place like home.” She returned from whence she came and life as she knew it will resume. The adolescent girl who acts rather than appears is now wiser to the proper rules of behavior for women, and Dorothy happily and eagerly accepts her place and role in life.

The audience is captivated by Dorothy’s journey and taken along as if each viewer were a member of the journeying party. Thus, another of Basinger’s principles applies, though in
general form and not specific to the woman’s film: “Movies were really only about one thing: a kind of yearning. A desire to know what you didn’t know, have what you didn’t have, and feel what you were afraid to feel” (5). Despite the numerous people present in the darkened theaters, films isolated the yearning in each member of the audience and pulled in each with methods of identification. As a result, not only is Dorothy’s journey recuperative for her, but it’s also recuperative for the men and women in the audience. As Kuhn has noted, the rules are returned to their proper places and “order is restored to the world” for both Dorothy and the viewers.

*The Wizard of Oz*, then, fits Basinger’s mold perfectly: Dorothy yearned for life beyond her Kansas farm and experiences that would give her a sense of purpose and acceptance beyond the nuisance that she seemed to be to her family, friends, and socialites. Her yearning opened that door to Oz, a land with the potential to fulfill those desires. The journey she embarked upon as a result of that yearning was a negotiation between two polar opposites that represent the good woman and the bad woman. And yet, true to films within Basinger’s definition of women’s films, Dorothy was able to take the audience on that journey with her.

Audiences, however, already knew they identified with Dorothy; they had thirty-nine years worth of books, films, plays, and the like to acquaint themselves with the idea. With the 1939 film version, one specific segment is crucial to audience identification with Dorothy: the part of the movie in which she sings “Over the Rainbow.”

After an opening section in which Dorothy is neither listened to nor otherwise acknowledged or understood, she proceeds to sing “Over the Rainbow.” The long, drawn out screen shots of Dorothy and their minimal editing, as well as Judy Garland’s unique voice, all pull the viewers into the film so that they identify with Dorothy’s desire to be somewhere else, somewhere where “dreams really do come true” (Langley et al 39). Just as Basinger argues that films are about yearning, so do songwriters Arlen and Harburg say about their song “Over the Rainbow:” “Arlen and Harburg had agreed that the ballad in *The Wizard of Oz* would be ‘a song of yearning. Its object would be to delineate Dorothy and to give an emotional touch to the scene where she is frustrated and in trouble’” (Harmetz 77). Misunderstood and alone, Dorothy’s desires for escape become one with the audience, an identification that tugs at another of Basinger’s principles: “[the woman’s film] drew women in with images of what was lacking in their own lives and sent them home reassured that their own lives were the right thing after
“all” (6). In the end, because of the recuperative nature of the film, Dorothy, like the audience, is reassured that her life in Kansas isn’t so bad.

Additionally, Campbell’s concept of “Crossing the Threshold” serves to reinforce audience identification by supplying the audience with a reason behind the tornado that sweeps Dorothy and Toto into Kansas, just as the common housewife might wish to be swept away from her own limitations as placed upon her by patriarchal society. According to Campbell,

A blunder—apparently the merest chance—reveals an unsuspected world, and the individual is drawn into a relationship with forces that are not rightly understood…[yet] blunders are not the merest chance. They are the result of suppressed desires and conflicts. (51)

The house is swept away by the tornado in “a blunder,” and yet, as Campbell suggests, it wasn’t by chance. The actions are as a result of Dorothy’s dreams to run away, a result of Dorothy’s desires for acceptance and understanding and to leave the emptiness of her existence behind. This is a longing with which the audience identifies based on personal experiences of isolation, being misunderstood, and/or simply just wanting to get away from the rules of society and existence for a little while. It is Dorothy’s desire to break away from where she is bound that sends her along the journey and the identification allows the audience to also be swept away by the “blunder.” By being a result of “suppressed desires and conflicts,” the tornado opens the door to the Special World, not just for Dorothy, but the audience as well.

This identification resonates with Basinger’s specifications. The Wizard of Oz released Dorothy—and thereby women—into a world of “potency and freedom” (Basinger 6). Dorothy killed. She loved. She sang and danced and had adventures. She had choice. And yet, through it all, when the journey was over, she simply decided there really is “no place like home.” She accepted the cultural reality that placed women back in the box of patriarchal codes. The film draws in women due to its challenge of the social norms, and yet, returns them home, ultimately the place they desire the most. Those values and norms then, for Dorothy and for the audience, remain intact.

In placing the woman back into the physical locality that was attached to the word “home,” Basinger’s notion of reassurance or recuperation stands. Bronfen argues that the dream allows Dorothy, and thus also the woman or housewife watching the film, to feel comfortable again in a world bound by codes and norms that had originally made them uncomfortable. The
film supports those very paradigms the dreamer/housewife went to the theater to escape in the first place, reinforcing the norms, reinforcing the codes, and reinforcing the patriarchal society. In placing Dorothy happily back in Kansas, the viewer is thus given reason to believe that her own circumstances are an acceptable place to begin with:

Fleming’s *Wizard of Oz*...propagates...[the idea that] the desire for a home is structured in such a way that the radical affirmation of the desire to go back home entails the annihilation of the work of fantasy...[This] enables the heroine to realize that she must accept the restrictions of her everyday life and the position assigned to her at birth in a non-negotiable symbolic world. (Bronfen 52)

The application of this passage to *The Wizard of Oz* serves to illustrate the recuperative qualities of the film. The return to the norm invalidates the fantasy, and Dorothy’s never-ending desire and excitement over returning to the physical locality of Kansas is equal to the identification of audience members with an excitement and desire for the status quo, an acceptance and even excitement toward the patriarchal values that held women in the bonds of social inequality.

This notion of recuperation is simple in the woman’s film. Echoing Campbell’s description of “Crossing the Threshold,” Basinger continues, “...for a woman, a decision is frequently the same thing as a disaster” (20). The decision for Dorothy to run away leads to the disaster of the tornado. Faced with an entirely new situation, the journey is ripe for her to want to return to that which she knows. Basinger’s characteristics of a woman’s film and the characters within can be applied to the female characters of *Oz*:

As the woman struggles to control, defy, resolve, escape—whatever—her world is a set of boundaries. She struggles to break free of them, with films often suggesting at the finish that only by pulling an even tighter boundary in around herself...can she really find happiness. (216)

Faced once again with a world she tried to escape, her new attitude is one of acceptance—for both Dorothy and the female moviegoer.

The epic “good versus evil” battle that takes place in *The Wizard of Oz* falls to two prominent characters in the film: Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, and the Wicked Witch of the West. The deconstruction of these characters requires a simple explanation with large implications in Basinger’s schemata: “[a woman’s film is] a juxtaposition [between]...the Way
Women Ought to be and the Other Way” (10). Within is the obvious dichotomy between the two witches of Oz, a dichotomy that represents the “Way Women Ought to be and the Other Way.” Dorothy is the adolescent negotiator between the two women. With their self-identification, the audience is also the negotiator, learning not only good and evil, but ultimately which types of women are good and which types are evil or bad.

In terms of Basinger’s definition of a woman’s film then, The Wizard of Oz fits because the film places Dorothy at the center of the film and follows her throughout Oz. The fantastic journey that follows pits good versus evil, represented by two very different women in terms of appearance and behavior. Though Dorothy’s primary concern is to return home, as the adolescent negotiator between the two polar opposites, Dorothy is placed at the center of the film and has to deal with the emotional and psychological problems that are specifically connected to two very different representations of women. Through Dorothy’s journey, the audience also learns the definitions of “good” and “bad” when it comes to women.

Aesthetics of Oz: Color Schemes as Recuperative

One of the most dynamic aesthetic techniques used in the filming of The Wizard of Oz is the contrast between Kansas and the Land of Oz as represented by the sepia-tones and Technicolor, respectively. In constructing this contrast, the filmmakers were able to easily establish a fantasy world for Dorothy and her dog Toto that, as Boggs and Petrie note, allows for “a new set of ground rules by which we judge reality” (43). The division between the Ordinary World of Kansas and this fantasy world, this Special World of Oz, is also clearly defined for the audience as they accompany Dorothy on her journey. Though the technique is a combination of the emerging use of color in film and the desire for the filmmakers to capture the bleakness of Kansas and the glory of Oz from Baum’s original story, its use is an indicator of the recuperative quality of the film. By sending Dorothy back home and returning to the use of sepia-tones, the film unwittingly emphasizes the acceptance of the social norms from which Dorothy originally fled. Consequently, this use also places the audience back into the Ordinary World of their own lives, welcoming the normalcy after such a fantastic journey.

33 See also 1939’s The Women, in which the black-and-white film breaks away for a Technicolor fashion show for the sole purpose of using Technicolor to highlight glamour.
As the author has observed, it isn’t just Dorothy being sent on this journey. From the very beginning of this fantastical movie, it speaks to the audience directly:

This story has given faithful service to the Young in Heart; and Time has been powerless to put its kindly philosophy out of fashion. To those of you who have been faithful to it in return ...and to the Young in Heart ...we dedicate this picture. (Langley et al 34)

Through this opening statement, the filmmakers draw the audience to the coming color difference as more than just a simple transitional device to illustrate the spatial change in the two worlds. It is another technique that draws the audience into the film and journey itself.

The film opens in sepia Kansas, with opposing forces challenging Dorothy and her sense of belonging and being understood. Not only do her family and friends seem to neglect her, but Miss Gulch, the power in the county, also seems bent on making her life miserable by taking away Toto. Dorothy, questioning her worth and her place, decides to run away, longing for “somewhere over the rainbow.” The lyrics to the song of the same name refer to colors such as those that reside in rainbows, and these references serve not only as a foreshadowing of the color that awaits her in Oz, but also provide a stark contrast to the colorless Kansas reality.

Being shut out of the storm cellar when the tornado comes, Dorothy goes into the house and the house is swept away by the storm. She awakens to find the house has landed; upon stepping out of the doorway, the color astounds not only Dorothy, but also the viewer. As if the change from the colorless Kansas to the colorful Oz weren’t enough, the film provides a glimpse of Dorothy still inside the sepia house, opening the door to the vibrant Oz. Both are seen simultaneously in support of the contrast, thereby drawing the viewer into the dream world and supporting Boggs and Petrie’s claim of setting new ground rules. In addition, the segments in Oz are filmed on elaborate sets where the colors are made even more vibrant by the use of Technicolor. Not only are the sets busy with color, they are busy and crowded with things: people, buildings, flowers, etc. In yet another contrast, the scenes in Kansas are vast and open.

Dorothy’s first experiences in Oz are in Munchkinland. First she sees the Munchkins and then Glinda, the Witch of the North, floats down in a color-changing bubble and magically appears so that she may question Dorothy about the occurrences that lead to the death of the Wicked Witch of the East. The Wicked Witch of the West appears in a flash of red smoke to find out who killed her sister, only to be antagonized by Glinda. After being further enraged by
Glinda, who replaces Dorothy’s simple black shoes with the Ruby Slippers of the Wicked Witch of the East, the Wicked Witch of the West disappears in another cloud of fiery red smoke, and the scene once again returns to a happy-go-lucky Munchkinland.

This introductory segment introduces Dorothy and the viewers to the Land of Oz, and the color and vibrancy overwhelms both Dorothy and the viewers so much that initial appearances are easy to accept at face value. Oz is presented as a joyous place, with no fears or difficulties other than those which are created by an outside force: the Wicked Witch. The Wicked Witch, a calculating personification of evil that creates turmoil in an otherwise pleasant Land of Oz, presents the negative images of Oz; she is an outside force that causes fear and turmoil in the lives of happy Oz-ians.

The turmoil Dorothy faces in Oz is not just about her struggle to find her way back to Kansas. It is also about the Ruby Slippers placed on her feet by Glinda, the Good Witch of the North, and the desire of the Wicked Witch to have them. Dorothy is faced with a natural desire to return home after being misplaced, but also the struggle to keep the Ruby Slippers. Her journey ultimately leads her to defeat the Wicked Witch in her quest to return to Kansas. In the end, Dorothy did not have to defeat the Wicked Witch at all; rather, all she had to do was click her heels together three times. This is a careful manipulation by Glinda, despite the journey it brings to Dorothy. Dorothy kills both Wicked Witches; both times she claims the deaths were accidents. Both acts, however, are praised by residents of Oz and are either celebrated or simply dismissed by Glinda.

There are three notable powerful figureheads in the Land of Oz: Glinda, the Wicked Witch of the West, and the Wizard of Oz. The eternal battle between good and evil applies to the dynamics between the Wicked Witch and Glinda; however, with the antagonizing and patronizing manner in which Glinda speaks to the Wicked Witch and Dorothy as evidence, Glinda only uses others as pawns in the game under the guise of being a guide. Superficially she aids Dorothy in her quest; however, she merely shoos her out of Munchkinland, wakes her from the drugging effect of the poppies, and eventually sends her along her way. No one ever questions her motives. She simply dismisses it all as Dorothy needing to figure it out on her own. As a result, all three sources of power in Oz are flawed in some way or another. The Wicked Witch is presumed evil and can be visibly seen as such through her actions, anger, and her perceived ugliness. The Wicked Witch of the West is the only one who is exactly as she
appears. The Wizard is debunked as a fraud. Glinda, presumably simple minded, is manipulative and patronizing in her own way. The forces of power then all provide adequate reasons for suspicion.

By contrast, through the quest of the Scarecrow, Tin Man, the Lion, and Dorothy, the film reveals that the qualities each of them searched for were within them the whole time. Each demonstrated his “missing” quality prior to the Wizard’s bestowment; each simply didn’t realize that when faced with certain obstacles, each had within him enough of his sought after qualities to work through the hardships. While the three major power players in Oz are debunked, the journeyers, on the other hand, find their own power within themselves.

The color green also has interesting uses in the film. Not only is the Wicked Witch of the West green, but so is the Emerald City and the shroud surrounding the Wizard of Oz himself, at least while his façade remains in tact. Green is a color of the rainbow and can be seen in the myriad of colors in the bubble in which Glinda appears. The mayor of the Munchkin City is also dressed in a green coat. The inference then, is that greed and envy and wickedness as personified in the Wicked Witch—the most prominent display of green as evil—also roams free throughout that which appears to be good, beautiful, and bountiful. Even Dorothy, following the Yellow Brick Road and wearing a blue dress, is capable of evil, as she kills two witches. Combine yellow with blue, and green results. As she first appears in Munchkinland, she kills, yet her good nature or her bad nature is called into question, and the murder is celebrated. By the end of the film, she is clearly good because she defeated the Wicked Witch, the supposed terror of Oz, thus suppressing that which is considered bad in the eyes of patriarchy.

Residually, there is hope that Dorothy may retain the lessons learned in Oz. Unfortunately, the conversation that takes place in the final segment leads to an understanding that the only thing Dorothy wants is the dependence of home.

AUNT EM (gently) Oh, we dream lots of silly things when we…
DOROTHY (with absolute belief) No, Aunt Em. This is a real, truly live place. And I remember that some of it wasn't very nice. But most of it was beautiful. But just the same, all I kept saying to everybody was, “I want to go home.” And they sent me home! (She waits for a reaction; they all laugh again) Doesn't anybody believe me?
Uncle Henry (soberly, softly) Of course we believe you, Dorothy. (Langley et al 131-132)

Patronizingly, her family and friends accept her words, while Dorothy in turn accepts their patronizing reactions. While Dorothy’s own feelings of being misunderstood forced her to look outside her home to the Land of Oz, her affirmation that “There’s no place like home” and acceptance or dismissal of the reactions from those around her reaffirms that any personal growth of Dorothy’s in this fantasy land is all for naught. It is a recuperative ending that shows the viewer that Dorothy’s cycle will continue, and she may once again seek answers outside her Kansas home. The unanswerable question is, has Oz prepared her for when that time comes?

Perhaps the real key to the truth of each world rests in Toto, Dorothy’s faithful friend. After all, Toto escapes from three different baskets: the one belonging to Miss Gulch, the one belonging to the Wicked Witch, and the one belonging to the balloon in which the Wizard says will return her to Kansas. Toto himself uncovers the mystery behind the Wizard when he pulls the curtain away from the Wizard’s chamber. Dorothy seeks advice from Toto and hates to be separated from him, even at the risk of being left behind by the Wizard as the balloon lifts off. Toto can therefore be seen as a part of Dorothy, that independence which she clings to in the final scene, that one element of her that continues to struggle against her constraints.

Kansas is sepia, but there is no grey area. Oz, on the other hand, is full of life—uncertainty and strangeness, to be sure, but definitely life. Kansas holds no choices, whereas Oz holds an abundance of choice. Kansas holds the girl alone, ensconced in family and the safety net of the elders around her; Oz, on the other hand, is more about herself, her actions, and how she responds to the situations in which she finds herself.

The Wizard of Oz represents an individual’s personal quest for knowledge, experience, wisdom, strength, and courage. Personification through the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Lion, and the revelation of the Wizard are all parts of this individual quest. The catch is that Dorothy ended up right where she was in the beginning: sepia-toned Kansas. Though surrounded by those who played various roles in her Oz dreamscape, the patronizing moments of acceptance by Aunt Em and the others suggest that though Dorothy went on this quest, she is only momentarily the better for it, that the “forward movement” Dorothy made on her journey is simply negated or downgraded. Whereas many stories of the archetypical journey have characters that “not only move from point A to point Z, but they realize other nonspatial goals as well…and coming to
terms with themselves and their fellow travelers” (Belton 27), Dorothy’s trip is further described by Belton: “The journey film always looks forward to getting there; as a result, the spectator always arrives, even when the characters do not…” (27-28). Dorothy’s end is simply that there is no place like home; however, in light of film’s opening statement and the color schematics utilized to draw the viewer in, Dorothy’s journey is also most definitely a journey and lesson for the viewer as well. Yet while “the journey film always looks forward to getting there,” the “there” in mind is Kansas, sepia, drab, and lonely. It is recuperative for both Dorothy and the viewer.

Oz is the active place and time of transformation, a transformation that is all too soon caged in the sepia-toned world of Dorothy’s Kansas farm life. Part of the opening statement includes the following line: “Time has been powerless to put its kindly philosophy out of fashion.” It is true; the movie is a timeless melding of the classic search for acceptance and personal growth with song and dance and fantastical themes. However, it is precisely the fantastical that is not so fantastical when stripped to its personified core, and thereby presents a colorful representation of the real. With the Technicolor dream world wrapped in sepia-tones, the recuperative ending is presented clearly by the chosen aesthetic color schematics.

Segment and Motif Deconstruction

Though many segments of The Wizard of Oz already weave throughout this analysis, it is important to return to certain parts of the film as separate entities in support of these deconstructions. In addition to those segments already discussed, recurring motifs occur throughout the film, including the helpmates’ search being placed above Dorothy’s own and the Wicked Witch’s idle threats that cause no bodily harm until the traveling companions decide to invade her castle with “Witch Repellant,” a giant net, and a gun, among other weapons of destruction.

The opening scenes in Kansas provide a glimpse into Dorothy’s adolescent life and pull the audience into the trials of the heroine. She’s a child, innocent and pure, a necessary element for her to negotiate between the forces of good and evil. She does not recognize Toto’s actions as the invasion of personal space and property that they are to Miss Gulch, and she does not take responsibility for the actions of her own dog. It is not because she is in denial; rather, it is simply
because she is a child with boundless energy, unaware of the rules and ways in which the world operates. The opening scenes introduce the audience to the antics of the farmhands and the loose structure of the Kansas farmhouse, where Dorothy seemingly causes nothing but mischief and is out of place amongst her family. The audience knows Dorothy and Toto are the central focal points.

As soon as Aunt Em tells Dorothy to run off and find a place where she won’t get into any trouble, the music fades in under the scene and the farm noises fade away. The camera shots are long drawn out shots, and there are five cuts or edits. The result is a piece that demonstrates Dorothy’s isolation in the farm, her daydreaming tendencies to find a place where she belongs, and her attachment to Toto. When combining this segment with the song “Over the Rainbow,” the piece draws the audience into the troubles of this young girl and establishes an identification with her. This identification is also allegorical to the general plight of being misunderstood and feeling alone, out of place, and isolated by even those one holds the most dear.

Immediately following this segment, the viewer is introduced to Miss Gulch. The music shifts from the orchestral arrangements of “Over the Rainbow” to the ominous tune known forever more as the Wicked Witch’s anthem. Miss Gulch rides with purpose on her bicycle towards the Gale farm, and the audience knows her purpose can’t be good for young Dorothy. Miss Gulch scatters chickens out of the way as she pulls up to the farmhouse, and immediately Uncle Henry senses something is wrong. The strength of Margaret Hamilton’s acting and character is apparent from even these opening scenes—sharp movements, purposeful strides, determined clips in her voice—all point to a woman who lives by a different set of rules than the Gale household. Though she lives by the county law, it is Gulch who appears at the Gale household, carrying an order from the sheriff allowing her to remove Toto from the home. The Gales do not respect Gulch’s power or authority, but they must abide by it. Though Miss Gulch appears to act civilly towards the Gales, it is only when she is patronized and challenged that she becomes angry. Miss Gulch acts reasonably and well within her rights, but since Dorothy is the heroine and Toto is the only comfort she has, Dorothy, and thus the viewer, sees Miss Gulch as a “wicked old witch” who has exceeded the boundaries of proper behavior.

The segment in which Dorothy steps out of her house and emerges in the Land of Oz is perhaps the singular most important part of the film in determining the boundaries of good and evil. The color of the film shifts from the bland sepia-tones into the brilliant Technicolor and the
legendary line “Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore,” is the first line spoken as Dorothy walks into the unknown. The background music as Dorothy walks into Munchkinland is another orchestral arrangement of “Over the Rainbow,” indicating that Dorothy and Toto are indeed, somewhere over the rainbow, the place of longing about which Dorothy previously sang. This music gives way to a song all its own, soprano voices humming and hinting at the emergence of the Munchkins and the appearance of the glamorous Glinda, the Witch of the North.

Glinda approaches slowly in a bubble that displays multiple colors of the rainbow, and her entrance is elegant and demure. As Glinda appears from her bubble, she is dressed in a very pink, very glittery, very glamorous costume, a wand in her hand and a giant crown on her head. As Glinda’s strawberry blonde hair complements the outfit, she appears as both a princess and fairy godmother combined. She walks with grace, her countenance is innocent and kind, and her demeanor is as a mother to a child. Billie Burke’s bubbly performance gives a hint of little intelligence and little independent thought.

Glinda asks Dorothy if she is a good witch or a bad witch, to which Dorothy responds, “I’m not a witch at all.” Glinda then asks if Toto is the witch. This conversation between Dorothy and Glinda reveals that only bad witches are ugly. By asking Dorothy if she is a good witch or a bad witch, she suggests that Dorothy has the power to be a witch, but her “good” qualities or “bad” qualities are yet to be determined. Her beauty or ugliness is something Glinda cannot decipher by looking at her, though clearly in the conversation she reveals that only bad witches are ugly. This conversation further substantiates the claim that Dorothy, as a child, is the negotiator rather than the indicator. Dorothy reiterates that she is not a witch at all—she has yet to learn of her power for good or bad; she has yet to claim her position in the social structure as determined by the male gaze. “Witch,” therefore, is also a metaphor for “woman.”

The Munchkins sing and dance about the Witch being dead, and appear as children might dress up to play the game of “town.” Having already assuaged their fears, Glinda watches the number as a mother watching their children during playtime, beaming proudly and waving her wand in encouragement. Patriarchal social roles are evident from the beginning in Munchkinland. The mayor, coroner, barrister, and soldiers are all male. The Lollipop Guild is also male, and the ballerinas are all female. Dorothy joins right in with the Munchkins, caught
The surreal atmosphere, complete with costumes that include flowers on the tips of the Munchkins’ shoes, is like a child’s playtime. Dorothy joins; Glinda encourages.

The Wicked Witch of the West appears in a cloud of red smoke and with a thunderclap, just as the revelry seems to begin to wind down. The Munchkins scatter, clearly afraid. The Witch stands in stark contrast to the bright colors of Munchkinland, her lanky, angular frame cloaked in black, complete with a black hat and her green coloring and sharp facial features. Her concern is immediately for her sister, and Margaret Hamilton’s sharp clipped tone indicates the Witch’s anger. As a mother dealing with a threat to her children, Glinda engages the Witch in a playful antagonistic conversation covered with a superior air, seemingly amused by the Witch’s anger and frustration. Much to Dorothy’s shock, Glinda involves Dorothy in the argument by placing the Ruby Slippers on her feet. Like the mother of a child who’s encountered a bad influence, Glinda swoops in and attempts to steer Dorothy away from the Wicked Witch. The Wicked Witch’s sister just died, Glinda makes catty fun of her, and Glinda tells Dorothy she’s made “rather a bad enemy of the Wicked Witch of the West,” when it’s Glinda’s manipulation that encouraged the Witch to act even more angrily towards Dorothy. When Glinda disappears after setting Dorothy off on the Yellow Brick Road with nothing more than a warning and a little direction, it is clear she is using Dorothy as a pawn in whatever game she has going on with the Witch. In this game, she also puts Dorothy on the path to becoming a “good” woman, battling choice, freedom, potency, and the evils of “bad” women.

After Dorothy and the Scarecrow meet up with the Tin Man and he joins their traveling party, the Wicked Witch makes another appearance. She threatens the Tin Man and the Scarecrow with bodily harm if they don’t stay away from Dorothy. She is menacing towards them, but at the same time, they are protecting the girl who killed her sister and has her stolen shoes. Like Miss Gulch, a woman who lives outside social boundaries and patriarchal norms, justice is out of the question. Dorothy is seen as a hero rather than a fugitive in the eyes of patriarchal society. Likewise, it is up to good women who live within the boundaries to squelch questionable or bad behavior in themselves and other women.

Though Dorothy and the Scarecrow do not mention to the Tin Man why they are on the way to see the Wizard before inviting him along, when they convince the Lion to join them in their traveling party, they only mention the Scarecrow’s desire for a brain and the Tin Man’s desire for a heart. Dorothy makes no mention of a home until they start singing again. When
they meet the Wizard for the first time, though Dorothy approaches the Wizard first, the Wizard calls forth the Tin Man, Scarecrow, and the Lion and proclaims what they seek while he calls Dorothy a “whippersnapper” for chastising him for scaring the Lion. Yet again, Dorothy does not speak her own desire—it is not her proper place to do so. Female needs and desires are secondary to those of men.

Though the Scarecrow and Tin Man vowed to see Dorothy to the Wizard regardless of their own personal reasons, it is Dorothy who scolds the Lion when he advances on Toto. The building segments show camaraderie and, in the mythological journey, provide Dorothy with helpmates, however; they also show her taking on the motherly role to their childish antics. The Scarecrow is clumsy, the Tin Man rusts, and the Cowardly Lion is afraid. They cannot function without her; they are dependant upon her. They show her that, like Glinda and her behavior with the Munchkins, to be a proper woman means to have dependants, or “children.” Dorothy is the one that keeps them going, and Dorothy is the one that takes care of them and nurtures them until she gets captured by the Witch, requiring that she be rescued like the traditional damsel in distress.

Though the Witch threatens the male helpmates34, she never directly threatens bodily harm to Dorothy until she realizes she can’t remove the Ruby Slippers from Dorothy’s feet as long as Dorothy is alive. Even still, her famous line “I’ll get you my pretty, and your little dog, too,” spoken when the Witch is first introduced, makes no mention of what “getting her” actually means. The only direct action she takes against Dorothy comes when she sends the poppies to the boundary of Emerald City; however, the poppies merely put Dorothy to sleep. These segments, combined with the fear evident in Munchkinland despite Glinda’s acknowledgment that the Wicked Witch has no power there, suggest that the strength and severity of the Wicked Witch’s power is more imagined than real. After the segment with the poppies, the Wicked Witch exclaims, “Shoes or no shoes, I’m still great enough to conquer her!” The fact that she is unable to do so means that her magic power is also not the only reason she is feared. These scenes also suggest that the evil and dangerous woman is the one that challenges men.

Another segment worthy of deconstruction is the one in which Dorothy melts the Wicked Witch. The fast paced nature of the chase through the castle gives way to a slow and agonizing

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34 See, for example, the segment in which the Wicked Witch confronts Dorothy, the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion prior to their arrival in Emerald City. The Witch says she’ll make a beehive out of the Tin Man and she throws a fireball at the Scarecrow.
melting away, the result of an accident as Dorothy tried to put out the flames on the Scarecrow’s arm.

**Witch**  Ohhh! You cursed brat! Look at what you’ve done! I’m melting! Melting! Oh, what a world! What a world! Who would have thought a good little girl like you could destroy my beautiful wickedness!

(Langley et al 119)

The Wicked Witch understands the patriarchal system in which she lives. She understands that in such a system, she is perceived as wicked while Dorothy, in conquering the Wicked Witch, is good. This statement from the Wicked Witch as she is dying doesn’t validate the Witch as wicked, except through the gaze of patriarchal society. As a result, it underscores the audience’s understanding of Dorothy as “good” and the Witch as “wicked.” True to the characteristics of the woman’s film, the unyielding bad woman meets her ultimate demise.

Following the Witch’s death, the Winkies hail Dorothy for freeing them from the clutches of the Wicked Witch, for freeing them from their guard duties and their servitude. Men are not central characters in the film, other than the farmhands cum helpmates and Professor Marvel/Wizard. Yet this celebration of men in the killing of the woman who held power over them is significant because it is a metaphor for women holding power over men. It is the final segment at the castle, the final release from the threatening power of the Wicked Witch, or bad, misguided women.

The segment in which the Wizard leaves in the hot air balloon is also important. Dorothy and Toto were supposed to accompany him in the balloon and return to Kansas, but a cat jumps out of a woman’s arms and Toto chases after the cat. Dorothy jumps out of the balloon and chases after Toto. While the Scarecrow and the Lion drop their ropes seemingly to go help Dorothy fetch Toto, the Tin Man unwraps his rope from the pillar, thus releasing the balloon into flight. Despite the Tin Man’s cries for help, he physically unwrapped the rope from the post. It isn’t until Glinda arrives and the Tin Man asks Dorothy what she has learned that Glinda sends Dorothy home. The finishing touch on this patriarchal social-role learning journey is that it is Glinda, deferrer to the Wizard and mother to the Munchkins, who shows Dorothy how to get home. It comes only after the Tin Man botches the Wizard’s attempt and asks Dorothy what she has learned on her journey. It is final closure to ensure that Dorothy really did learn what she was supposed to learn on this journey. What she was really supposed to learn on this journey
was that “there’s no place like home,” but only if that home is the physical locality and structure of the actual house and the patriarchal social roles that the physical locality entails.

As an audience, we understand Professor Marvel as a kindly old man, albeit a fraud, who tricks Dorothy into returning back to the Kansas farm. Professor Marvel’s counterpart is the Wizard of Oz, also a fraud. However, he is a mysterious kindly gentleman that happens to be the last person Dorothy sees before she lands in Oz and one of the first people she sees upon returning to Kansas. The ruse of his crystal ball and the ruse of his power in Oz are both clear; yet when he is debunked in Oz, no one seems to be startled by the fact that their “Wizard” is a simple old man. "Professor" and "Wizard" are the titles of his roles in both places, yet he is also a fraud in both places. Male deceit, therefore, is kindly and justified. A woman’s deceit, personified by the Wicked Witch’s power—real or imagined—is negative.

The final segment of the film has Professor Marvel showing up while Dorothy is recovering: “I…I just stopped by because I heard the little girl got caught in the big—well, she seems all right now” (Langley et al 131). Professor Marvel knows nothing of where Dorothy lives, other than the limiting photograph from the beginning of the film. In the scene where Dorothy is running away, there is a house on the horizon that Dorothy is walking towards, which indicates that the Gale farmhouse isn’t the only farmhouse in the area. The Professor, a traveling con man, does not know exactly where Dorothy lives, yet he is the first to show up by Dorothy’s bedside, aside from Aunt Em and Uncle Henry.

When Dorothy points out the people that were in Oz, she looks at Professor Marvel and says “And you were there!” Aunt Em dismisses Dorothy’s claims as a silly dream, attempting to assuage Dorothy’s fears and excitement as a mother would a child. Yet, the Professor and the farmhands, while they laugh at the silliness of it all, do not comment that it was a dream. The Wizard then, and the Professor, easily debunked as a fraud and kindly old man through the innocent eyes of adolescent Dorothy, is actually the mastermind behind it all. He tricks Dorothy into returning to the farmhouse as Professor Marvel, but in order to drive the point home, a journey to Oz is in order, complete with his accomplices, the farmhands.

There are two crystal balls used in the film. The first is in Professor Marvel’s wagon, in which he claims to see Aunt Em suffering. He uses the trick to manipulate Dorothy into returning to the farm. The second crystal ball comes into play in the Wicked Witch’s castle. When Dorothy is locked up and time is ticking away, Dorothy sees Em in the crystal ball calling
for her. The Wicked Witch’s crystal ball is real, whereas Professor Marvel’s crystal ball is a ruse.

Locked in the Witch’s castle, Dorothy sees Aunt Em in the crystal ball and cries out that she’s frightened:

**AUNT EM (calling)**  Dorothy…Dorothy, where are you?  It’s me—It’s Auntie Em…we’re trying to find you…where are you?

**DOROTHY (sobbing)**  I’m here in Oz, Auntie Em!  I’m locked up in the Witch’s castle…and I’m trying to get home to you, Auntie Em!  (AUNT EM’s face has begun to fade from the crystal, having made no sign of hearing DOROTHY.)  Oh, Auntie Em—don’t go away!  I’m frightened!  Come back!  Come back!  The Witch’s face suddenly appears in the crystal instead.  DOROTHY shrinks back from the crystal in terror.

**WITCH (mimicking DOROTHY)**  Auntie Em, Auntie Em!  Come back!  I’ll give you Auntie Em, my pretty!  *(She laughs.*)  (Langley et al 109)

The Wicked Witch has already been established as the woman feared because she does not follow the rules and codes of patriarchy. Here, Dorothy is frightened by the unknown and clings to the known. She is frightened by the Wicked Witch who lives outside of the norms and calls to Aunt Em, the matriarch of her Kansas life, a woman brought up in a world of patriarchy and given the task of passing those values down to Dorothy.

And yet, the woman of considerable power in Oz, the woman who refuses to cater to the wishes of the Wizard, mocks Dorothy’s fear, mocks that which Dorothy has known to be true. She is mocking Dorothy’s attachment to the familiar. Dorothy is but a child afraid of the unknown. The unknown is empowerment; the unknown is breaking away from those codes that all the others represent.

**The Characters of Oz**

*The Wizard of Oz* is a mythological journey that follows the exploits of Dorothy Gale in the Land of Oz. The movie is filmed in both sepia tones and Technicolor to represent the differences between Dorothy’s home in Kansas (the “Ordinary World”) and the Technicolor world of Oz (the “Special World”), the magical land she spends most of her time in the film
wandering through. Of the four main women in the film, there are two constants between the lands: Dorothy and Em (however, Em is only seen in Oz through the Witch’s crystal ball.) Of the remaining female characters, only Margaret Hamilton portrays two characters in the film: The Wicked Witch of the West in Oz, and Miss Gulch in Kansas, both women of power. Glinda, the Witch of the North, is only in Oz, with no apparent counterpart in Kansas. Of the male characters, Hunk, Hickory, and Zeke are the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion, respectively. The ruse of a magician, Professor Marvel, becomes the ruse of the Wizard.

Of the main characters in the film, the most important for the deconstruction in this analysis are the women in the film, precisely the polar opposites of the Wicked Witch and Glinda. They are the two representative forces of good and evil, and they are the images most worthy of deconstruction. As previously mentioned, Dorothy is the adolescent negotiator between the two, and though she will be mentioned here, the predominant images worthy of the most depth and time are the two witches. It is in Dorothy’s removal from Kansas that allows her to see the extremes of behavior, but it is her clinging to Kansas that represents and reinforces the values already taught.

An important distinction needs to be made between Glinda, The Witch of the North and The Wicked Witch. Though she calls herself “The Good Witch of the North” and uses magic, Glinda is more like a fairy or fairy godmother (Huck 4) of folklore than a witch in the historical context. Reis notes,

> The concept of “witch” and the charge of witchcraft help to set and police the boundaries of female normality and acceptability. Women who challenge cultural notions of appropriate conduct…——— even women who wholeheartedly embrace social norms—were (and are) vulnerable to masculine apprehension and mistrust, and in extreme cases to accusations of witchcraft. (xii)

In light of this, a simple historical understanding of the word “witch” itself carries the baggage of not only historical persecution, but also the negative connotations that indicate women who step outside and/or challenge the “natural” social boundaries set up by patriarchal society. The word “witch” is automatically associated with the word “evil,” simply because of the history of persecution and fear associated with those defined as “witches.”
The distinction then, is that despite the fact that Glinda is The Witch of the North, she need not be defined as such, as there is no such thing as a good witch. The fact that Glinda is actually named and the Wicked Witch is not, and that Glinda is only minimally referred to as a witch and is instead referred to by name reinforces that she is less associated with the term “witch” than the Wicked Witch. In addition, Glinda’s supposed powers, which in the film amount to very little when compared to the Wicked Witch’s powers, don’t challenge cultural notions of appropriate conduct because she defers to the Wizard of Oz, a patriarchal figure. Yet, the bad witch, and thus the idea that witches are bad, falls within the parameters noted above.

The fear of the Wicked Witch in the film is quite tangible. And, as Hearn suggests, that fear transcends the narrative and moves to the audience: “Some small children attending the [advance] screening [of The Wizard of Oz] were so terrified by the Wicked Witch that they had to be taken out of the theater” (25). In response, the studio removed some of her more ominous lines. However, children to this day are still scared of the Wicked Witch, and even Hamilton prevented her own son from watching the film until he was at least six years old.

The color of the Witch is the first element worthy of deconstruction. She is green. No one else in Oz, other than the Winkies (the guards under the Witch’s control), is green, or even any other color. Even the Winkies’ color isn’t as vibrant and obvious as the Witch’s. Her color then already marginalizes her, relegates her to the status of the Other. However, because she is green, she cannot even be relegated to the “exotic other” status by the audience, because she is completely abnormal, an abhorrence, an Other even among Others. There is no desire for a complete and obvious physical aberration as perceived by a society ruled by a dominant white male patriarchal system.

By Glinda’s announcement upon her first interaction with Dorothy that “Only bad witches are ugly,” part of that visible Otherness is part of that which makes the Wicked Witch ugly. Glinda even asks Dorothy if Toto is the witch that brought such good fortune to the

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35 Even Billie Burke, the actress who portrayed Glinda, thinks of Glinda as a fairy: “A script from June of 1938 describes Burke’s role as that of a child’s idea of a good fairy. ‘Outside of her scripted lines, Burke concurred with this description, and referred to her character exclusively as a good fairy rather than use the term witch.’” See Huck, 21 who also quotes Scarfone and Stillman. The Wizardry of Oz. New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2004: 72.

36 In her introduction to Aljean Harmetz’ book The Making of The Wizard of Oz, Margaret Hamilton recounts an anecdote in which she had no idea the effect she had in the film until she saw the movie at its opening at Grauman’s Chinese Theatre—“...it was not until the movie’s opening...that I had any idea of what had been wrought. When I cringed at a few shots of the Witch, I was all the more convinced my son should not see this movie” (xx).
Munchkins and Oz by killing the Wicked Witch of the East with the house. Only bad witches are ugly, yet the cairn terrier could potentially be the good witch that Glinda and the Munchkins are inquiring about. The Wicked Witch’s appearance then, is even less attractive than that of a dog.

Ugly, of course, can mean ugly in appearance and/or ugly in character. The Witch’s power and menacing attitude in combination represent evil, and the fact that she is nameless alludes to unpredictability and “out of control” behavior. She cannot be named therefore, she cannot be controlled. The only time there is trouble in Oz is when the Witch controls the trouble. She throws fear in the hearts of the innocent, and she causes trouble for Dorothy and her cohorts. Never mind the fact that Dorothy killed the Witch’s sister, a fact only mentioned once, and never mind the fact that, according to Glinda, the Wicked Witch has no power over the Munchkins. If the Wicked Witch has no power over the Munchkins, then it is her appearance, assertiveness, independence, and her anger in her first meeting with Glinda and Dorothy that the Munchkins fear.

Recalling the “ugliness” and “evilness” associated with the term “witch,” Widdowson provides more historical background for the Wicked Witch. Examining “frightening figures,” Widdowson argues, “They are all abnormal in some way and their abnormalities are central to the frightening aura which surrounds them” (201). The Wicked Witch is abnormal in her appearance and her actions are against or challenge the established norm. Widdowson continues:

Extreme ugliness…[is] typical of descriptions both of living women denounced as witches during the Inquisition and also those depicted in folk narrative…They often dress in dark, dirty, ragged clothes. They may mutter to themselves or display other signs of abnormal or antisocial behavior. (202)

Again, the Otherness of The Wicked Witch, visually and behaviorally as described above, falls into this historical category.

With the historical connotations as they relate to the image of the Wicked Witch in mind then, theoretical support comes in the form of the “male gaze” and the objectification of women in order to fulfill men’s desires. In a patriarchal society in which the male gaze prevails, the Wicked Witch is everything that goes against male desire. Consequently, her “to-be-looked-at-ness” (Mulvey 48) results in determining “how she will be treated” (Berger 37). The Wicked
Witch is marginalized by her drab dress and green color, she is desexualized, and she defies the Wizard of Oz, the preeminent figure in Oz and a man representative of patriarchal society. Her appearance and actions challenge and threaten Oz, thereby they challenge and threaten the norms patriarchal society has established. Under the male gaze then, these characteristics are ugly, unappealing, and trouble. Therefore, the Wicked Witch is bad; she is evil.

Basinger says this is also in response to the traditional role of women in society and the ways in which the Wicked Witch does not comply. Basinger defines an evil woman in the following manner:

...a female who, whatever the plot variation may be...actually tak[es] power into her own hands...She refuses to do her job as a woman. In other words, she is refusing to conform to the standards of good behavior for women. (66)

Thus, for women living in a patriarchal society, any source of autonomous power for one’s own gain is evil; therefore, the Wicked Witch is evil, as is her counterpart, Miss Gulch.

Golden ties together these historical and theoretical ideas in her historical assessment of witches: “…in order for men to feel safe in a society where men are supposed to hold all the power, women’s powers must be ‘domesticated...’” (244). The Wicked Witch’s “domestication” comes in the form of lording over her dominion of flying monkeys and henchmen that are under her spell. The Winkies—her guards, her henchmen—are just that: men. She controls them, and with her death, they are released from bondage and servitude. The segment in which Dorothy kills the Wicked Witch has the Winkies celebrating the death of the Wicked Witch, celebrating freedom from her control. It is therefore not a woman’s destiny or appropriate behavior to lead or control men.

Miss Gulch is the Kansas counterpart to the Wicked Witch of the West. Other than the farmhands and Professor Marvel, she is the only one that appears in both lands, discounting the appearance of Aunt Em in the Witch’s crystal ball. Miss Gulch is a powerful woman in Kansas who, in Aunt Em’s words, “owns half the county.” She seeks to have Dorothy’s dog, Toto, taken to the Sheriff to be destroyed because the dog bit her. She also calls the dog “a menace to the community” (Langley et al 41). Miss Gulch has rights to her claim, since Dorothy herself admits that Toto gets into Gulch’s garden “once or twice a week” and she admits to Toto chasing Gulch’s cat. Though Miss Gulch is arguably overreacting, she is within her rights to seek a
claim on Toto because of the bite and because the dog keeps getting into her garden and chasing her cat. Yet, she isn’t unreasonable. When she tells Aunt Em that she wants the dog destroyed, Aunt Em suggests they keep Toto tied up. Miss Gulch considers it, saying that it’s for the sheriff to decide.

Basinger states, “Whereas it is okay for a woman to marry rich, it is dangerous for her to have her own money” (66). There are no indications that Miss Gulch is married, and in fact, her title of “Miss” indicates that she never has been married. She owns half the county, yet has never been married. This, in the eyes of the woman’s place, especially in film, is very bad. Miss Gulch’s “evilness” shines through in the manner in which she interacts with Dorothy and the Gales. However, she has every right to seek out the law’s help when Toto runs through her property and bites her, a fact that gets forgotten as much as Dorothy’s accidental killing of the Wicked Witch’s sister.

Though there is no direct counterpart to Glinda in Kansas, in Oz, Glinda is the polar opposite of the Wicked Witch. Her dress is an elaborate gown with pink ruffles everywhere that balloons out like a glamorous ball gown. Her makeup is “pretty,” and her countenance is kind to everyone except the Wicked Witch.

The first meeting with Glinda comes as soon as Dorothy lands in Oz. The Munchkins call her to find out about this witch that has “dropped a house on the Wicked Witch of the East” (Langley et al 54). Glinda, therefore, is in part a guardian of the Munchkins, a child-like race of people who sing, dance, make lollipops and sing lullabies. As the guardian of the Munchkins, she wasn’t doing a very good job of protecting them from the Wicked Witch of the East, but she is their mother figure. Through her speaking mannerisms and her actions towards the Munchkins, she treats them like her children. She sings to them and comforts them in the presence of Dorothy, the unknown, and the Wicked Witch, a known. The Munchkins, then, metaphorically, are her children. Motherhood, to Basinger and Haskell, is an essential role and major event in a good woman’s life. By having all these children then, Glinda is the perfect mother.

Glinda does not challenge the cultural norm. Her very slow, very glamorous methods of appearing in a bubble and the creation of snow to rouse Dorothy and friends from slumber suggest that her powers are non-threatening in nature. Her deference to the Wizard of Oz demonstrates that a male figure holds power above her. There are two segments that best
illustrate this. The first is when Glinda and Dorothy first meet. When Dorothy expresses her desire to return home and that she cannot return the same way she arrived, Glinda tells the girl “The only person who might know would be the great and wonderful Wizard of Oz himself” (Langley et al 63). Either Glinda does not yet know that Dorothy already has the power to return, or she defers to the needs of the Wizard. Her glorifying adjectives of “great” and “wonderful,” preceded by the fact that she states the only one who might know how to send Dorothy back to Kansas is the Wizard, indicate that whether or not Glinda knows how to send Dorothy back, she is serving or deferring to the wishes of the Wizard. She is deferring to the wishes of the patriarchal system, and thus showing what good or acceptable behavior for women is.

The second segment in which this is evident comes in the final scenes in Oz, just prior to the Wizard’s untimely balloon launch. Glinda is nowhere around; however, the Wizard places the Scarecrow, Tin Man and Lion in charge during his absence. Though he says he may not return, and though he says he does not know how to control the balloon, he alludes to the fact he will in fact return by placing the three in charge “in his stead.” Though Glinda has magical powers and ultimately tells Dorothy how to return home, the Wizard does not place her in charge. Clearly the Wizard rules in the Land of Oz. Glinda floats down in her little bubble, sends Dorothy home, and returns to her own world or to check in on her Munchkins, the only other identifiable land in which Glinda is physically shown. By contrast, the Wicked Witch shows up in Munchkinland, in the Emerald City, at various points throughout Dorothy’s journey, and at her own castle. Her very mobility contrasts with Glinda’s relative immobility, metaphorically symbolizing the constraints of Glinda’s, and thereby “good” women’s, power.

Parsons provides an historical assessment of women in fairy tales that agrees with these deconstructions of both the Wicked Witch and Glinda:

Women [in fairy tales] are divided with the designation “good” or “evil.” … Karen Evans (1996) notes that in the traditional canon, a powerful female is most often ugly if not evil. Marcia Lieberman agrees that “women who are powerful and good are never human; those women who are human, and who have power or seek it, are nearly always portrayed as

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37 Glinda also appears in the poppy segment to wave her magic wand and make it snow, but she is not in the same physical space as the Hero Team.
repulsive” (1986, p. 197). Another view, however, is that when real help comes to the female protagonist, it is usually from a fairy godmother or other wise woman, and when real trouble is created, it is usually by a witch or wicked stepmother (Lurie 1990). (137-138).

These designations for women fall into the attributes of the characters in *The Wizard of Oz*. There are good women in the film and bad women in the film, and under the patriarchal power structure, that duality is a straightforward issue. The power of the Wicked Witch causes trouble for Dorothy, and is perceived as ugly *and* evil. When help comes to Dorothy, it comes in the form of the “fairy godmother,” otherwise known as Glinda, the Witch of the North.

Dorothy is the adolescent negotiator between the “good” of Glinda and the “bad” of the Wicked Witch. As an adolescent, she relies heavily on preconceived notions and has not yet learned to look beyond the curtain. Her own “goodness” or “badness” is yet to be determined, but her wide-eyed innocence makes her the perfect target for the journey of patriarchal social-role acceptance. Despite claiming that she killed both witches as accidents, any guilt she may feel is relieved by the glory bestowed upon her by the denizens of Oz. She effectively squashed the bad behavior demonstrated by the Wicked Witch. She even forgives the Wizard for being a “humbug,” because her desire for returning to Kansas and the desire for her friends to receive that which they desire is ultimately answered by the confusing monologues of the self-professed “Doctor of Thinkology.”

In one manner, Dorothy’s helpmates become Dorothy’s children. She takes it upon herself to see that they get what they need, even if it means she’s unable to get what she wants. She helps the others grow to a point where she is no longer needed, and thus becomes the self-sacrificing mother figure of which both Basinger and Haskell wrote. In order to make her journey completely successful then, the Wizard says he will take her home. After the Wizard leaves without her, the completion of the journey comes when Glinda sends Dorothy home. The bubbling princess fairy godmother figure who defers to patriarchal rule in the Land of Oz and is content with the status quo is the one that sends Dorothy home. This strongly reinforces Glinda as representative of good women to both Dorothy and the audience and provides a piece of closure to the journey and recuperation.

The Kansas mother-figure is Aunt Em. There is no indication that Aunt Em has birth children of her own; however, she is the matriarch of the Kansas homestead. She is Dorothy’s
care-taker and she also takes care of the farmhands, Hunk, Zeke, and Hickory—she scolds them like children, she feeds them like children, and she is the constant to which Dorothy clings. Aunt Em, the family matriarch, represents “home” while Dorothy is in Oz. Though Uncle Henry is the first one Dorothy pleads to when Miss Gulch comes to claim Toto, it is Aunt Em who has the sharp tongue and power over the domestic duty of mentoring the child.

Em defers to Henry with the warrant, Henry decides the sheriff’s warrant is valid, and Em attempts to persuade Dorothy as to the legality of the situation. Em is the mediator between the outside world and the child, thus performing her duty as a mother-figure. She is the one responsible for caring for and dealing with Dorothy. The only time Aunt Em is seen doing farm work as opposed to domestic work is when she is counting the chickens with Uncle Henry, an emergency caused by a broken incubator. Otherwise, she scolds the farmhands, brings them food, and knits. Any power that she may have gained over time has come through the proper channels of domestic trust. She knows her place. Uncle Henry, on the other hand, is the one who makes the decision based on the laws of the world outside the home. He also displays disdain for Miss Gulch: he plays with her words and spanks her with the gate swing. He sees her through the male gaze as a woman who exercises too much power.

Throughout The Wizard of Oz, Dorothy is placed in a position that reveals qualities of good women and bad women. Viewers are also in a position to realize the qualities of good women and bad women through their identification with Dorothy. Dorothy, as a child, serves as a negotiator between the two polarities, thus providing the audience with a clear glimpse into the dualities. Under the rules put in place by a patriarchal society, “good” and “bad” are qualities defined as they relate to the power holding male dominant structure.
CHAPTER IV

Conclusions and Further Study

The 1939 film The Wizard of Oz starring Judy Garland, Margaret Hamilton, Billie Burke, Ray Bolger, Bert Lahr, Jack Haley and Frank Morgan is one piece in a long line of media exploits spawned from L. Frank Baum’s 1900 children’s book The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. It is a text whose productiveness continues today, over a century since the tale first graced the edges of American identity. Since its emergence into social consciousness, the whirlwind of activity has never ceased. The film has its grip on society, and society has its grip on the film.

The magic of this classic film transcends production problems and previous interpretations. Watching The Wizard of Oz has become a time honored tradition, consistent with the opening lines of the film: “Time has been powerless to put its kindly philosophy out of fashion” (Langley et al 34). Time has been powerless to put The Wizard of Oz out of fashion. When other adaptations, earlier or later, fade away, when even the original story itself loses luster in the literary world, this film remains.

It is the ideal of “home” and the feeling that there is “no place like home” that captures the young at heart. It is the power of good triumphing over evil, the power of camaraderie and the quest for one youngster to find a place in the world. It is the magic of Technicolor juxtaposed against the stark Kansas farm life and the power of one girl to make a difference in the lives of others. It is a song about a rainbow, cut after the first sneak preview only to return after adamant protests (Harmetz 81-82) and become Judy Garland’s signature song. The magic of the film is now the crux of the story. Though productions came before and other commercial endeavors prospered, this film is the film.

With a film as powerful and widely accepted as The Wizard of Oz, there are many deconstructions possible. Even before the film was made, the story itself was subjected to critical responses; these only grew in number and kind as the popularity of the film grew. Brummett uses the film as an example of multiple methods of rhetorical criticisms in his book Rhetoric in Popular Culture because, writing of:

… an example of an experience that is surely familiar to anyone who has lived in the United States for more than a couple of years; watching the
1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. That movie, broadcast every year on television and widely available on videotape, comes as close as anything to a universally shared experience of popular culture within the United States. (111)

Not only is the film so widespread that it is easy for this author to use it as examples of certain styles of critique, but critiques of the film have already been done in these styles, which perhaps makes it easy for Brummett to include them in his book. The notoriety of the film works both ways: because it is so popular, it is easy to use as an example and because it is so popular, these critiques have already been performed.

The challenge then is to look beyond the surface structure and ideal of “home” and “good versus evil” and the stages of the mythological journey to an angle that has perhaps received little attention. Though much has been said of the subjective quality of the Wicked Witch’s true nature, the author wanted to show that the negotiation between the dichotomies of good versus evil was driven and determined by the patriarchal society in which the film was made and is still consumed. The ideological approach, though it uses much feminist scholarship as theoretical underpinning, also breaks from feminist theory and allows the analysis to delve into other aspects of film history and culture.

The work of Jeanine Basinger is such a useful tool because she is practical in her assessment of the woman’s film and creates a schemata. Though she touches on feminist theory and scholarship, she does not dwell in it—the message she puts forth is independent of feminism, though there is an overlap that she readily acknowledges and debates. What makes Basinger’s schemata even more interesting and useful is that she herself does not apply it to *The Wizard of Oz*. The analysis then, as it applies to Basinger’s schemata, isn’t a regurgitation of her work; it is an interpretation of *The Wizard of Oz* with Basinger as part of the theoretical groundwork. *The Wizard of Oz* is many things: it is fantasy, it is a drama, it is a musical, and, in using the work of Haskell, Kuhn, and Basinger, it is also a woman’s film.

Though Basinger’s schemata does not rely solely on feminist principles, there is potential for further feminist study: the presentation of trinkets to the helpmates and the analogy of the Ruby Slippers. The journey is a maturation process for Dorothy, Scarecrow, Tin Man, and the Lion and, in the end, she is the only one who does not receive a trinket. It is this obvious lack that is the focal point for difference and the reinforcement of the dominant social codes. Also in
line with potentially furthering a feminist analysis of the film rest the Ruby Slippers. One popular feminist idea utilized by Brummett as an example of feminist critique is that the Ruby Slippers represent menstruation. As Dorothy’s journey is a lesson in maturation, codes, and roles, the Ruby Slippers are a metaphor for her own sexuality. She was ready to give the slippers to the Wicked Witch, but neither does she try to remove them herself nor can the Witch remove them for her. These slippers ultimately take Dorothy home, and back into the patriarchal structure. If the slippers represent menstruation, then it is a metaphor for power over her own sexuality. As long as she’s menstruating, she can have a baby. Power over her sexuality means she can have a baby if she wants, a direct contrast to the power allowed a “good” woman. Both the trinkets and the shoes are points for further feminist scholarship.

As a woman’s film, the nature of The Wizard of Oz places the woman’s yearning to break away from the social codes as the central point of the film by focusing on Dorothy’s negotiation between good and evil forces. As good and evil forces, as light and dark in clothing and appearance, Glinda and the Wicked Witch stand as polar opposites. Perhaps there is no counterpart to Glinda in Kansas because that type of woman does not truly exist. As the polar opposite then, the Wicked Witch does not truly exist, yet she has a counterpart in Kansas. The linking of Miss Gulch to the Wicked Witch is a deliberate association between women of power and wickedness. Yet, the wickedness of the Wicked Witch and the cruelty of Miss Gulch are debunked through a deconstruction of the segments in which they appear and the imagery of how they appear. They are wicked and cruel only when seen through the lens of the patriarchal society in which they were created and are consumed.

Because the steps of the mythological journey are flexible, those steps are also open to many interpretations. If Toto is the part of Dorothy that continues to step outside the norms and/or continues to want to step outside the norms, could Toto in fact be Dorothy’s mentor, despite no introduction of him as such? Is it possible that the reason for the twister isn’t the blunder of Dorothy’s desire, but rather Professor Marvel’s longing for Dorothy to learn her place, thereby sending her to Oz? Another aspect of the mythological journey not examined here is the concept of the Trickster. Appearing as helpmates, the tricksters actually are manipulators, and there is mounting evidence to suggest the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Lion were more than just simple helpmates. They keep Dorothy along the path and slowly erode her self-assuredness. All are questions for further study.
The use of the sepia-tones in contrast to the vibrant Technicolor filming technique represents the split between the Ordinary World and the Special World. Yet because of the recuperative quality of the film, the return to sepia-toned Kansas is fitting. Reality isn’t so vibrant as a dream; it isn’t so vibrant as a moment of change. The static life of daily existence gives way to Technicolor moments, but in *The Wizard of Oz*, does the journey make a difference? Journeys create change, yet the return to the sepia tones visually reinforces the place from which Dorothy came. Her journey has shown her to accept her life and the grayness of the codes by which she must live. Through audience attachment then, the audience is also placed back into the space where patriarchal social codes are validated and reinforced.

Professor Marvel and The Wizard represent the ruse of patriarchy—they are all constructions in one way or another. However, the patriarchal structure is so embedded in cultural existence that, in the end, the deception, much like the lies of the Professor and the Wizard, does not matter. The construct remains. The Professor and the Wizard are kindly old men, in charge, with all the answers to the questions of a wandering little girl. The final icing on the cake is the fact that it is Glinda who provides Dorothy with the simple knowledge of how to return home. It is the proverbial nail in the coffin, sealing the lid shut on the patriarchal social norms that attempted to break free. Patriarchy then, is faceless, projected and perpetuated by the male dominant structure and the complacent women within it.

The issue of ideals is a strong one. Because the values of intelligence, courage, love, and home are values also imbedded into the culture, the rest of the film and the film’s messages skim below the surface. Yet a brain, a heart, and courage are as intangible as a home, qualities that come from within. While in the end, the Wizard provides the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and the Lion with trinkets representing their highly coveted qualities, “home” is always treated in the film not as an intangible creation of the heart and mind, but as a physical locality: Kansas.

DOROTHY…it wasn’t enough for me to want to see Uncle Henry and Auntie Em…and it’s that if I ever go looking for my heart’s desire again, I won’t look any further than my own backyard; because if it isn’t there, I never really lost it to begin with! (Langley et al 128)

Though Dorothy does not say “Kansas” in this particular moral tirade, she does say “my own backyard,” a limiting physicality that has nothing to do with the intangible qualities of “home.”
Dorothy’s “heart’s desire” is located within a structure, within a place, within a home, because a woman’s job is to love and serve, and Dorothy has learned this lesson well.

The film is about the protagonist learning proper behavior for women, and that as the adolescent negotiator rather than the actual good or bad woman, the message becomes that much clearer for the audience viewing the film. To be true to the tenets of the woman’s film, the bad woman must either realize she is bad and change, be punished, or die. In *The Wizard of Oz*, however, two of those three results occur: not only is the bad woman (the Wicked Witch) killed, but the negotiator, the heroine, reaffirms the qualities of the good woman due to the recuperative nature of the film. Not only does the bad woman die, but the neutral adolescent learns what it means to be a good woman and wholly embraces it. She kills the Wicked Witch with no repercussions, and in doing so, she kills the independence, assertiveness, and empowerment for which the Wicked Witch and liberated women stand. “The good selves,” Basinger says, “survive in the end to show everyone how women ought to behave” (84). As an audience, we know Glinda survives. And yet, she is left in Oz to flit about in all her princess glory, ensuring that the overall order of the patriarchy remains.

While the experts and historians in the documentary *Because of the Wonderful Things it Does: The Legacy of Oz* believe Oz to be the ultimate matriarchy, they do not realize the contradictions inherent in their own choice of words. Though the film appears to be empowering for women, the film essentially reaffirms the very patriarchal values and codes that female empowerment struggles against. Those codes are imbedded in history and language as much as they are imbedded in film, and the overriding themes of good versus evil, friendship, family, and home that make *The Wizard of Oz* so popular gloss over two facts: historically, for women, the meaning of “home” is a physical locality rather than an intangible value, and that the male patriarchal power structure dictates proper behavior for women. It is through understanding the context in which the story and film were created and continue to be consumed that the film reaches this deeper level of meaning.
1999.


-- Parsons’ listed source for Karen Evans quotation:

-- Parsons’ listed source for Marcia Lieberman quotation:

-- Parsons’ listed source for A. Lurie’s quotation:


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