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Is Being Wicked the Same as Having Wickedness? A Dialogue on Human Nature between Wicked, Frankenstein, and Rousseau's Second Discourse

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Is Being Wicked the Same as Having Wickedness?

A Dialogue on Human Nature between

Wicked, Frankenstein, and Rousseau's Second Discourse

A Thesis

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Of the University of San Diego

By

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In a witty reworking of a classic aphorism, Winnie Holzman and Stephen Schwartz's 2003 Broadway smash-hit *Wicked: The Untold Stories of the Witches of Oz* opens with Glinda, the Good Witch, posing a question which the rest of the show will answer: "Are people born Wicked, or do they have Wickedness thrust upon them" (Chenoweth, "No One Mourns the Wicked")? This philosophical exploration into what makes people wicked, and by association the essence of human nature, is not singular to the musical *Wicked* or other popular literature. Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacque Rousseau, in his own investigation into this question in his *Discourse on the Inequality Among Men*, radically argues that a) humans aren't violent by nature and b) humans aren't social by nature. To Rousseau, it is society itself that twists human nature from empathetic and benevolent to malicious and power-hungry, starting from the family and working out to all levels of society. Two very popular texts in our society today, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and the aforementioned *Wicked*, explore Rousseau's theory. *Frankenstein's* Monster is in a more direct agreement with Rousseau, personifying the transition from benevolence to corruption via the desire for family and community. Elphaba, on the other hand, problematizes Rousseau's theory by proving that empathy between individuals can prevent individual corruption and work to correct the ills of society.

Since Rousseau, as a well-known to the Romantics¹ Enlightenment philosopher, directly influenced the creation of *Frankenstein*, his *Second Discourse on the Inequalities Among Men*

¹ The Romantic period in literature, or Romanticism, is roughly timed from the 1790s, around the French Revolution, to the mid-1800s. Romantic authors range from Mary Shelley's parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, to William Blake, Lord Byron, and Samuel Coleridge. Simply defined, this literary movement, in part, was a creative reaction to much the philosophy and learning espoused during the Enlightenment of the 1700s, a switch from a heavy emphasis on the purely rational back to the natural and imaginative. Several elements key in Romanticism are an emphasis on originality (as opposed to emulation, parody, or plagiarism), subverting the status quo (such as questioning institutions like the government and church), and the power of nature to inspire and calm one's spirit.

needs to be understood. This discourse operates in three parts: how man would be in a true state of nature, how that state of nature evolved into civil society, and why there are so many ills in society. There are two types of “man” in his discourse: man in the state of nature, known as the Savage Man, and man in society, known as the Social Man.² Rousseau asks the reader to suspend disbelief as he paints a picture of man more than a few millennia ago: solitary, satisfied, self-sufficient, and apparently savage. His argument is that the transition of this Savage Man, and humanity, into the Social Man, and civilization, drastically alters man, as the ability to empathize is buried under socially constructed desires for socially constructed ideas such as power, fame, and reputation. This, for Rousseau, is the true cause of all social ills, and even some of the physical ills, humanity currently faces. Rousseau, as critic Timothy O’Hagan argues, is directly opposing “at least two received doctrines concerning essential human characteristics, the Aristotelian assumption of natural sociability and Hobbesian assumption of natural aggression,” (O’Hagan, 37). Combined, this sociability and belligerence innately posits wickedness in human nature, and society is needed to regulate that wickedness. Rousseau claims the opposite: that man is innately good, and it is society that teaches man to be violent, and therefore wickedness is a learned trait. For Rousseau, the creation of family units is the bedrock for wickedness and inequality, aggregating these lessons as family units grew into larger communities. At one point Rousseau emphasizes this divergence between the Savage and Social Man, remarking, “nothing could be more unhappy than the Savage Man, dazzled by science, tormented by his passions, and reasoning about a state different from his own” (Rousseau, 18).

² Though termed the Savage and Social Man, “Man” here does not mean male so much as humanity in general. In this essay, the titles of Savage Man, Social Man, and Savage-Social Man will continue to use “Man” in reference to all humanity, not just half.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* picks up this idea that family and society corrupt benevolence, as the main tension of the novel is the unfulfilled parental obligations Victor owes his creation and the ways the Monster delves into moral depravity to obtain, or avenge himself of, these obligations. The Monster, then, can be and has been seen as a representation of the transition from Savage to Social Man, because of the subsequent corruption of his soul. Both the Monster's experiences and Rousseau essentially argued that the Savage Man in all respects is better off than the Social Man. The first reason for this, as described by O'Hagan, is because the hypothetical forest the Savage Man lives in "is a circular, self-producing state in which all needs are satisfied," meaning the basic necessities of food, water, and shelter, the only things the Savage Man would want, are perpetually plentiful (O'Hagan, 40). In this forest, then, the Savage Man is at his physical peak, because "he must exercise most those faculties which are most concerned with attack or defense, either for overcoming his prey, or for preventing him from becoming the prey of other animals" (Rousseau, 13). This includes not just physical strength and endurance, but basic resourcefulness and cleverness to outwit his predator and survive in nature. The Savage Man, for Rousseau, has no need to learn more than basic survival skills. This is how the Monster begins after his creation and abandonment by Victor, wandering "the forest near Ingolstadt," eating berries, "attempting to imitate the pleasant songs of the birds," and eventually distinguishing "the insect from the herb, and by degrees, one herb from another" (Shelley, 70, 71). Throughout the Monster's narrative, a constant theme is his ability to observe and utilize his surroundings to his advantage, as the Savage Man does.

The second reason the Savage Man is better off is because he exists in total social isolation. In this state, the Savage Man has compassion for other humans, the more the Savage Man "identifies himself with the animal that suffers...which, by moderating the violence of love

of self in each individual, contributes to the preservation of the whole species. It is this compassion that hurries us without reflection to the relief of those who are in distress” (Rousseau, 20). This means that the Savage Man is most likely to help another being, human or animal, because of an ability to empathize with that creature without heavily considering cost to himself. The Monster clearly exhibits this benevolence and empathy in regards to the de Lacey family, while his presence is still unknown to them. When he realizes they are starving in winter, he ceases to steal their food so as not cause them further hardships. In addition, he “often took [Felix de Lacey’s] tools, the use of which [the Monster] quickly discovered, and brought home firing sufficient for the consumption of several days,” helping the family with their daily chores (Shelley, 77). The Monster empathizes with the family’s suffering – only later would he understand it as poverty – in winter, and continues to do so in the spring, though he still hadn’t established a formal relationship with any member of the family, and so was still isolated.

Rousseau further makes a point to emphasize that the Savage Man is an independent being – sans language, sans community, sans government. Therefore, he would not know of, nor naturally desire, things such as language, community, or authority. Through the formation of society, the Savage Man is taught to desire these things, which underlies his transition into the Social Man. As the outsider, the Monster literally looks into the cottage of the de Lacey’s and learns about all of these, starting with familial community, moving to recognizing that ultimate authority rested with the father de Lacey, and advancing to language. The words he picks up fastest are practical, “*fire, milk, bread, and wood,*” but the abstract concepts, “*good, dearest, unhappy*” he stumbles on until he secretly learns French alongside foreigner and newest de Lacey, Safie (Shelley, 77). However, this education isn’t as joyful as it could have been; Rousseau argues that the Savage Man would “know neither hatred nor the desire for revenge,”

nor “a sense of injury,” if not for society because he’d have no way to compare his state to another’s in order to feel these emotions (Rousseau, 41). With his education, the Monster can do just that, comparing himself to the family, and quickly begins to despise his otherness:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers – their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a transparent pool!... when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (Shelley, 79)

He learned with Volney’s *Ruins of Empires* that the epitome of society was to have “high and unsullied descent united with riches,” and began to realize that his appearance isn’t the only barrier to society he must battle (Shelley, 82, 83). In questioning, “where were my friends and relations,” the Monster develops the “desire to claim [the de Lacey’s] protection and kindness; my heart yearned to be known and loved by these amiable creatures: to see their sweet looks turned towards me with affection, was the utmost limit of my ambition” (Shelley, 84, 92). When the Monster finally pleads his case to blind Father de Lacey, who sympathizes with him, his plan fails as Felix, with one look thinking the Monster a threat to his father, threw the Monster from his father and struck him, not giving the Monster a chance to speak or defend himself. The Monster fled the cottage with feelings of “rage and revenge... from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and, more than all, against him who had formed me, and sent me forth to this insupportable misery” (Shelley, 95). Thus, the Monster turns his wrath and frustration on Victor, for thoughtlessly creating and abandoning him instead of showing the love and support to him that Father de Lacey showed to his children.

In Shelley’s novel, society is a double-edged sword. Its great irony, and its stark difference from the pure state of nature, is that it teaches man the “violence of love of self” which allows humans to act in wickedness through teaching them to desire relationships with

others, especially ones where they are in power (Rousseau, 20). Society allows men to divide labor, which permits specialization in occupations and leisure for artistic creation, leading to “the natural inequality of mankind” by increasing “the inequalities of social institutions” (Rousseau, 22); some occupations are deemed more noble and desirable than others, and thus a hierarchy is born in community. To summarize Rousseau, though the stringent adherence to a perpetuated, social hierarchy takes centuries to form, the point being made is that the formation of society, from the family out, delineates relationships between humans where one is inferior to another, either because of some dependence or through a lack of physical and/or intellectual training. These differences are then augmented by assumptions of how these unequal relationships should play out; these assumptions eventually become law, which influences the punishments dealt to those who are seen as acting in violation. The Monster learns this through his education at the de Lacey’s and utilizes it to frame Justine, the Frankenstein family’s adopted cousin, for the murder of the youngest Frankenstein, William, the boy she was suppose to care for, as part of his revenge against Victor. For Rousseau, “the bonds of servitude” created by “the mutual dependence of men on one another and the reciprocal needs that unite them” in society cement a series of slave-master dynamics from family to work, such as Justine’s with the Frankenstein family (Rousseau, 23). This slave-master dynamic act as another source for the learned wickedness of the Social Man, since, as a slave, he resents his dependence upon and perceived inferiority to another; or, as the master, he resents the potential of the slave to revolt and switch their roles. The Monster understood this when framing Justine, knowing that her perceived retaliation to her masters, the Frankensteins, would be enough of a scare to others to warrant her death. This dynamic begins with parent-child relations in families and is extrapolated throughout the larger society as minorities resent the rule of the majorities who in turn fear being subjected

to domination themselves. In the state of nature, however, “every one is there his own master” because each man only needs himself to survive (Rousseau, 23). In summary, for Rousseau, isolation is freedom; society is bondage, emotional baggage, and power-dynamic violence.

Because the Monster transitioned from a state of nature to society, Shelley can work him into these slave-master relations in the dynamic of parent-child relations. The Monster’s first plea calls upon Victor to fulfill his neglected fatherly duties to the Monster by ensuring him a society that accepts him, by making him a bride like himself. The Monster reasons that a creature just as hideous as him will accept him, since they’d both be rejected by human society; the Monster promises that they will retreat to a remote recess of the world together, never to bother humanity again. Victor acquiesces for fear that his child-creation will murder anymore of his family members. However, this time he actually contemplates what this female creation might think about being created, being forced to marry another being, and being rejected by a society she’d probably deem superior to herself. He comes to the conclusion that she would be a menace both as a second monster and as the possible mother of a new and violent species; for the sake of humanity, Victor destroys her before completion. Recognizing that his only true dependence on Victor was for a female, that he deserves justice for yet again being denied the parental care owed to him by Victor, and that the stark physical difference between himself and Victor allows the Monster to terrorize Victor physically and psychologically (by destroying the people around him) with impunity, the Monster proclaims: “You are my creator, but I am your master; - obey” (Shelley, 120). This again reflects Rousseau’s belief that to “see a still more unequal contest, set [the Savage and Social Man] together naked and unarmed, and you will soon see the advantage of having all our forces constantly at our disposal” (Rousseau, 11). In his transition from Savage to Social Man the Monster consciously commits sins such as acts of revenge, including murder

and psychological torture, having learned that though absent in a state of nature, they are sometimes justifiable in a state of society.

Thus the Monster embodies the downfall of society as he shows that coveting society twists human benevolence to deceit, theft, scapegoating, murder, and much worse, in the pursuit of social constructs such as property, inheritance, family, romantic love, beauty, fame, power, wealth, and acceptance. As Zoe Beenstock notes, in this the Monster perfectly embodies the transition of the Savage Man to the Social Man: “the creature responds to Victor’s rejection by gradually changing from innocence to corrupt civilization, following the trajectory of human history from an individualistic state of nature to social being” (Beenstock, 407). In becoming a Social Man, the Monster can use the same teachings of society as justifications for his murderous deeds. As he and Walton look upon the corpse of Victor, the Monster justifies himself, lamenting, “I did not satisfy my own desires. They were forever ardent and craving; still I desired love and fellowship, and I was still spurned. Was there no justice in this” (Shelley, 106)? He continues saying, “the fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet even that enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am quite alone” (Shelley, 106).³ Though isolation is a key part of the Savage Man, the Monster has already become the Social Man by this point, and therefore needs society to create an identity for himself; this lack of acceptance by society, for the Monster, only indicates the injuries he’s received by the society he still desires to join. The Monster, even till the bitter end, believes that he was at least partly justified in his vigilante vengeance because of the constant way he was treated by strangers and the abuse Victor heaped on him. He does, however, recognize that “I am a wretch. I have murdered the

³ This is in reference to Satan from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, one of the three books the Monster found when he was with the de Lacey’s. He is arguing here that even Satan himself had companions, the other fallen angels, in hell. The Monster is asking, then, if the devil himself can have friends, why can’t he?

lovely and the helpless; I have strangled the innocent as they slept and grasped to death his throat who never injured me or any other living things” (Shelley, 106). As Edwards describes, the Monster personifies what it means to have wickedness in its traditional sense – evil: “Evil does not ask for forgiveness. Evil takes and destroys without any pause for consequence to others. Evil divides and conquers, creating division not unity” (Edwards, 47). He accepts the title of dæmon, wretch, and villain, because he was fully cognizant of the immoral actions he was committing. In a word, he embodies and accepted his wickedness.

In a similar vein, Elphaba accepts the title “Wicked Witch of the West,” as audiences assume, yet, unlike the Monster, she never truly embodies that title. She engages in the dialogue between Rousseau and the Monster through her social rejection based on her appearance, a conflict that also serves to depict the corrupt society around her and its tools for wider oppression. Yet she challenges the narrative by defying the gravity of corruption. Though she accepts the title of “Wicked” she never acts in wickedness, proving that there are solutions to society’s ills. This twist to the witch’s character engages the audience to expand their empathy and understanding of truth to learn from Elphaba’s point of view and apply it to their own lives.

The musical *Wicked*, based on the novel of the same name by Gregory Maguire, delves into the world of Oz.⁴ Told through the memories of Glinda after the Wicked Witch’s demise, the musical is a heart-wrenching whirlwind of political intrigue, social unrest, and moral ambiguity with upbeat music and stunning visuals. Where the Witch is deliciously evil in the 1939 film, here, the named Witch is a young woman wanting to make a positive difference in the world and hoping her altruism will eventually lead to social acceptance, just as with the

⁴ Maguire’s novel delves into the world of L. Frank Baum’s novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. The musical, on the other hand, interacts more with the 1939 movie; therefore, I will refer to the movie for comparison more so than the novels.

Monster.⁵ Already the fact that in this version she has more than just the title of Witch indicates that she is someone to be empathized with. She isn't a witch; she is Elphaba, who happens to be a witch because of incredible magical powers and training. Yet, like the Monster, her appearance is the barrier that separates her from her society. And like the Monster, most of her psychological damage stems from her father-figures and broken family, leading her to accept the title of wicked that others place upon her.

In quite a literal way, Elphaba and the Monster start out as creatures assembled from very different parts, and the physicality of this drives their ostracization. Through some deductive reasoning, and a plot twist clarified at the end of the show, Elphaba is revealed as a child of two worlds: the Wizard's (what is suppose to be our world) and Oz (via her mother). When conceived, the Wizard gave her mother a mysterious "green elixir" which is the origin of her green skin (Grey, "No One Mourns the Wicked"). Thus, her appearance denotes this combination of should-be impossible parts. Furthermore, being a child of two worlds is also the source of her incredibly powerful magic, like none other in Oz. The show highlights both the power and the inability to control it that Elphaba must deal with because of this. Both her skin

⁵ The author would like it to be noted that at no point in the novel does the Monster ever gain a name, either by himself or by Victor. He is just referred to as a monster or a wretch, both of which add to this "otherness" and dehumanization. This also parallels the Wicked Witch of the West in the movie and original L. Frank Baum novel. It wasn't until Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked* that she was named Elphaba. The psychological effects of leaving an "other" unnamed is explored in other papers, but it should be reminded that being nameless limits the ability to empathize with the character, in that they don't have a true identity by which they call themselves, just a title that others use. In giving Elphaba a name, she becomes a relatable character because her name isn't as heavily, negatively connoted as the titles of "Witch" or "Wicked" are. However, even the musical emphasizes the importance of a group to dehumanize their common enemy by denying that enemy a name, as in the song "March of the Witch Hunters," where Boq, now the Tin Man, cannot call her Elphaba: "And this is more than just a service to the Wizard. / I have a personal score to settle with Elph- / with The Witch! / It's due to her I'm made of tin / Her spell made this occur / So for once I'm glad I'm heartless / I'll be heartless killing her!"

and her magic repulse the man who believes he is her father, as he quickly states after her birth, “take *it* away [emphasis mine]” (McCourt, “No No One Mourns the Wicked”). This begins the constant “othering” that Elphaba suffers throughout the show, which isolates her from the society she wishes to inhabit, often leaving her to her own defenses. It is also this incredible power that first draws her actual father, the Wizard, to her – when he believes she could be his ally; when she turns on his political agenda, it is this same power he uses against her to demonize her and turn her into Oz’s greatest criminal. In a similar vein, Frankenstein compiled his Monster from dissonant parts. He admits that “the dissecting room and the slaughter-house furnished many of my materials,” detailing that this creature is made of both human and animal parts (Shelley, 34). Victor had specifically chosen these parts to make the monster “beautiful,” yet upon birth/animation he was filled with nothing but “breathless horror and disgust” (Shelley, 35, 36). Both the father figures in these tales create life without considering the consequences of their self-serving actions. The Wizard acts out of lust, Victor out of pride. Their children are the ones who suffer for their selfish deeds, as Elphaba and the Monster, throughout their stories, must constantly suffer calumny and consternation for appearances. In response, the Monster relatively quickly gives up trying to win humanity’s favor by doing good deeds, instead matching the wickedness he suffered through revenge. Elphaba, on the other hand, never lashes out in revenge and, for the majority of the show, continues to commit altruistic deeds for those she believes have been wronged, the Animals.⁶ In *Frankenstein*, the Monster is the only character suffering

⁶ The Animals are those animals in Oz who are anthropomorphic, or more human than beast. In Maguire’s novel they are designated with a capital “A” to differentiate them from the plain animals of Oz, noted with a lower case “a.” For Elphaba this issue is encapsulated by her goat-teacher at Shiz, Dr. Dillamond, who befriended and defended Elphaba. In the show, he tells her how other Animals in Oz are being persecuted as unable to continue their various occupations and reverting to their primal natures. Elphaba promises him she will enlist the aid of the Wizard

from persecution based on physicality; in *Wicked*, both Elphaba and the Animals are persecuted because their physical differences are seen as sub-citizen. It is Elphaba's ability to empathize with the Animals that pushes her to fight for their rights, in turn influencing other characters to recognize the problem with marginalizing an entire group of Ozians. Elphaba, as a character, both demands and creates empathy as a way to combat ignorance, ostracization, and violence. This completely counters the Monster, whose transition from benevolent to corrupt is mirrored by his switch from inspiring sympathy to inciting revolt. Because he acts in wickedness, the most he can achieve is objective sympathy; murder is still murder, and in committing his revenge crimes the Monster destroys his own ability to win the empathy of others, isolating himself from the ones he wants to join.

At this point, it's important to return to the main objectives of both characters. In the beginning of Act One, Elphaba's goal is assimilation into society:

Once I'm with the wizard
 My whole life will change,
 'Cause once you're with the wizard
 No one thinks you're strange!
 No father is not proud of you,
 No sister acts ashamed,
 And all of Oz has to love you.
 When by the wizard, you're acclaimed! (Menzel, "The Wizard and I")

Elphaba continues, dreaming that because of her inner goodness the Wizard will somehow "de-Greenify" her, enabling complete physical and social integration, both within the larger society and within her own family (Menzel, "The Wizard and I"). This changes by the end of Act One, however, as her desire for society is altered. Upon realizing the Wizard is the major cause of the social ills in Oz, Elphaba decides that her public acceptance is less important than the rejection

to stop this. Dr. Dillamond is later fired, before Elphaba goes to the Emerald City, and disappears.

of the Animals. She rejects the Wizard and the society he's building, telling Glinda that she's "through with playing by / The rules of someone else's game" (Menzel, "Defying Gravity").

When Glinda urges her to stay and conform, a decision that will grant Elphaba social acceptance and popularity, Elphaba argues in favor of isolation for a just cause, saying, "Everyone deserves the chance to fly / And if I'm flying solo / At least I'm flying free" (Menzel, "Defying Gravity").

Her chosen separation depicts the fatal flaw of society: "because individuality is fundamentally asocial, socialization must rely on coercion to achieve conformity" (Beenstock, 412). In rejecting coercion, she is able to create her own identity outside of society, based on her own morals and her desire to help others. This ability to accept isolation with faith in her own decisions stands in stark contrast to the Monster, who was never able to achieve such a self-validating mindset.

Though Elphaba never gains society, she does gain acceptance from three individuals, something the Monster does not achieve. These individual relationships stand separate from each other, and therefore do not constitute a society. As noted above, Elphaba has the acceptance of Dr. Dillamond, another social outcast, who arguably acts as a third father-figure for her.⁷ She has a friendship with Glinda, which will be explored later on. Her third relationship fulfills the romantic love relationship that society teaches is one of the highest a person can achieve. She falls in love with a man named Fiyero, who at first is infatuated with Glinda because she's "perfect" (Fitzgerald, "Dancing Through Life"). However, after coming to understand Elphaba, Fiyero falls for the green witch in the First Act, running away with her in the Second. His love validates her and her actions, as he falls for her altruism and passion for helping others; in turn, he is changed as his vapid, carefree personality shifts to be caring and desirous to do the right thing, loving Elphaba though she isn't "perfect." When he is imprisoned and tortured for

⁷ And the only good, if brief, one.

knowledge on her whereabouts, Elphaba is thrown into an existential crisis. At this point in the Second Act, Elphaba contemplates the failures of her life, recognizing both that she will never achieve the society she desires and that any good deed she attempted ended worse for everyone involved, commenting, “No good deed goes unpunished” (Menzel, “No Good Deed”). In this song she mentions two others, aside from Fiyero, whom she believes she has failed: Dr.

Dillamond and her half-sister Nessa.⁸ Her failure to effect positive social change for the Animals is represented in the de-evolution of Dr. Dillamond, from an Animal professor to an animal goat. Nessa, however, is a failure for multiple reasons. The novel explains this more than the show, but Elphaba’s family despises her because her non-biological father and sister blame her for Nessa’s handicap, from birth, because her non-biological father gave several potions to her mother to prevent a second child being green. Elphaba internalizes this blame, and this guilt is partly the reason for her intense protective instinct for her younger sister. The other half of her protectiveness comes from an honest place of sibling love, though it is evident that Nessa does not reciprocate this feeling, resenting Elphaba for her own physical abnormalities and the marginalization it causes. In an attempt to correct this, Elphaba gives Nessa the iconic ruby slippers, enchanted to allow her to walk. This delights Nessa, until the munchkin she loves, Boq, tells her he feels he can finally leave her service; this pushes Nessa to try to cast a spell on Boq for his heart, which Elphaba quickly amends to save his life, turning him into the Tin Man. Elphaba flees, and Nessa blames Elphaba for the transformation, scapegoating her once again and adding to the hatred the Ozians already have for her. Furthermore, because of the shoes Nessa can travel more, providing the opportunity for her death by house. Thus Elphaba’s act of reconciliation causes the death of her sister, and so she blames herself for her inability to even

⁸ This is in reverse order of the song, where she starts with Nessa and ends with Fiyero, to signify her mounting failures: familial, social, and personal.

help her own kin. These three failures compound, and Elphaba cannot help but accept Oz's hatred: "So be it, then:/ Let all Oz be agreed/ I'm **wicked** through and through... No good deed will I do again [emphasis mine]" (Menzel, "No Good Deed")!

The Monster, unlike Elphaba, does not have a sibling, does not have a mentor or positive father-figure, and does not have a romantic interest. One thing they do share, though, is an existential crisis. His comes after saving a young girl from drowning and is shot, realizing that his acts of kindness are wasted: "This was then the reward of my benevolence! I had saved a human being from destruction, and, as a recompense, I now writhed under the miserable pain of a wound, which shattered this flesh and bone. The feelings of kindness and gentleness, which I had entertained but a few moments before, gave place to hellish rage" (Shelley, 99). These are the key moments when each character acts as the Social Man, identifying themselves through other's perceptions of them, accepting the cruelty of the world they live in by internalizing and taking as negative their otherness. The Monster accepts that no human will ever show him the benevolence he is more than willing to share, and therefore decides, "if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear" (Shelley, 102). Elphaba comes to realize that both her social and personal goals are fruitless, regardless of how altruistically intended they were, and finally accepts the title of "Wicked" (Menzel, "No Good Deed").

Yet even at these moments they are not equivalent. The Monster goes through the entire tale of *Frankenstein* alone, which is the largest divergence between the two characters. Elphaba eventually realizes she has had one constant source of validation and support, regardless of whether they walked the same path: Glinda. From the beginning of the show, "they begin to understand each other's differences, and eventually develop acceptance and appreciation of their unique qualities," which leads to a relationship of support and encouragement from both ends,

even when they disagree (Lane, 5). Glinda, though never joining Elphaba in her actions, always ultimately accepts Elphaba for who she is and what she wants to do, as Elphaba does in turn. The love triangle between Fiyero and the witches never shakes their friendship with jealousy or bitterness. Elphaba accepts that she could never gain Fiyero's love and still holds Glinda dear, just as later on Glinda accepts that Fiyero loves Elphaba and that she still cares for Elphaba. Their friendship is stronger than any of these moments of difference and discord. In "Defying Gravity," they simultaneously sing, "I hope it [their separate life paths] brings you bliss, / I really hope you get it / And you don't live to regret it! / I hope you're happy in the end. / I hope you're happy my friend" (Menzel and Chenoweth, "Defying Gravity"). Elphaba chooses to be a social outcast in an attempt to help other outcasts; Glinda chooses to remain popular and socially accepted because that's been her desire throughout her life. These different paths brought them to several conflicts, such as Fiyero and arguing over the ruby slippers, yet, in "For Good," they freely sing, "Because I knew you, / I have been changed for good," utilizing the double entendre of both for the better and for a lasting period, recognizing both how influential and how positive the other's presence has been in their lives (Menzel and Chenoweth, "For Good"). Elphaba asks for forgiveness for her actions, to which Glinda responds, "But then, I guess we know / There's blame to share," both admitting, "none of it seems to matter anymore" (Menzel and Chenoweth, "For Good"). They accept their failings to others and each other and forgive them, recognizing their friendship is more important than those past moments. Furthermore, as Boyd musically points out, usually the good female is sung as a soprano (Glinda) and the wicked/elder/jealous female is an alto (Elphaba); however, in this song, Elphaba and Glinda vocally, "switch parts, refuting our prior assumptions of which witch is good and which witch is wicked. By momentarily trading places, their singing reveals not only the strength of their relationship, but

their equality and interchangeability. Elphaba is not more ‘wicked’ than Glinda; Glinda is not more ‘good’ than Elphaba” (Boyd, 113). By this point in the show, they’ve both done good and bad deeds and are truly human and worthy of empathy. This isn’t just a verbal confirmation of their friendship, but a vocal confirmation of how this friendship has altered them down to the way they sing. Through this entire show, Elphaba and Glinda have grown together, because they know each other. Elphaba gained an honest friend, who did not judge her by the color of her skin or her magical abilities; Glinda realized that her superficial desires to be popular and perfect, though gaining her power and prestige, are not more important than this friendship. So though Elphaba doesn’t receive the society she desired, she at least built three individual, supportive, and accepting relationships, which enabled her to invent her own identity outside of society and retain her compassion and goodness. By the end of the show, Elphaba never truly acts the part of the Wicked Witch, though she accepts the title, because of these supportive, constant, and accepting relationships.

Here, then, is where Elphaba and Rousseau interact. Rousseau’s *Discourse* does have a bit of optimism in his criticism of society; he argues that society corrupts most people... but not all. Only those who retain “the law of nature” even while living within the confines of human law – those who are most in tune to their inner Savage Man – are able to break “down the imaginary barriers that separate different peoples...and include the whole human race in their benevolence” (Rousseau, 30). These are rare beings, raised in society, yet are still compassionate and benevolent – most likely to fight for the rights of the oppressed and to call out social injustices. The ultimate difference between the Savage Man and the Social Man is this: “the Savage Man lives within himself, while Social Man lives constantly outside himself, and only knows how to live in the opinion of others, so that he seems to receive the consciousness of his

own existence merely from the judgment of others concerning him” (Rousseau, 37). Those who retain their inner Savage Man while existing within society can create identities that are self-sufficient, as opposed to the Social Man’s identity which is completely connected to their reputation and standing within their community. This third category of human kind can be described as the Savage-Social Man. Elphaba is the Savage-Social Man.

This is all well and good for understanding some of the meaning behind the experiences of these two characters, but what of their larger social implications? After all, these stories aren’t just about individuals. As stated above, everything Victor did was for the betterment of human kind, whether in conjunction with his own ego or to protect the human race from his misguided genius. Similarly, *Wicked* isn’t just about two friends; it’s about an entire society, and the social and political misguidance that those in power can create and correct. To fully understand both texts’ commentaries on the importance of empathy in relationships to ensure benevolence in society, more interpretations of the implications of these texts need to be addressed.

To start, historically, *Frankenstein* has been seen as a warning on various issues, hence its subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*.⁹ The allusion itself raises one warning: do not violate the will of the gods (for this novel, Nature), even if it is for a higher purpose – i.e. helping mankind. For the Romantics, however, this myth was viewed in a different light. Prometheus was an agent of liberation, who was seen to “raise doubts about the established order of gods, questioning their motives for creation, while giving justifications for rebellion against the reigning divine power, indeed finding nobility in revolutionary figures” (Cantor, IX); hence, this trope to humanize the

⁹ The myth of Prometheus, in short, is about a titan who steals fire from the Greek gods to aid mankind and who is punished for this transgression against the gods by having his liver eaten by an eagle for eternity (since he’s immortal and it’ll regrow).

rebel within Romantic literature was described as “sympathy for the devil” (Cantor, IX).¹⁰ Thus, Promethean characters can question the hierarchy of society and search for the root causes of inequality and oppression. Mary Shelley, however, took this myth further. First, she critiques Frankenstein’s own intentions for his creation, in that while hoping to achieve a great feat of discovery for human nature, Victor is acting out of pride and a desire for fame; as Paul Cantor describes: “Frankenstein’s activity as a creator presents such a mixture of idealistic and self-serving motives that evaluating it in moral terms becomes difficult. But whatever Frankenstein’s intentions may be, he clearly does not plan his creation with the interests of his creature in mind” (Cantor, 115). Victor acted not as a benevolent father figure but as a selfish and self-indulgent creator, signaling that not all leaders act from true concern for other human beings. Second, she complicates who is the rebel and who is the tyrant: “in *Frankenstein*... the issue of rebel vs. tyrant is complicated by the discovery that in the process of revolution, the rebel threatens to turn into a tyrant himself” (Cantor, X). Mary Shelley creates the Monster and Frankenstein as mirrors of each other’s evolving natures – of their fears, hopes, and even frustrations – and this outward projection of their faults onto each other only pushes their cycle of violence against one another “for not living up to [their] expectations” of how the other should be (Cantor, 117). Victor resents his creation for being a monstrosity and the Monster resents Victor for failing to care for him as a son. They are each other’s tyrant and victim, in a never-ending struggle for power and vengeance. It is exactly this the lack of empathy and the ability to identify with the other that separates Victor and the Monster, pitting them against each other as enemies. From the familial standpoint the Monster uses to make demands of Victor, this cycle of violence results in a representation of negligent and/or abusive parent(s) harming their children, who retaliate with

¹⁰ The novel’s opening inscription and references to Milton’s *Paradise Lost* also heighten the heroic view of rebelling against a tyrannical, all-powerful monarch.

the same violence they feel the victim of, justifying their actions on the fact that their parent(s) failed in their parental obligations.

Furthermore, many feminist readings of the novel take this critique one step further, arguing that this story, and Victor and the Monster's cyclical battle, is truly a cautionary tale of keeping women out of the progression of society, silencing their contributions, and relegating them to a domestic sphere in which they still have no power. The three named women in this novel – Caroline Frankenstein, Elizabeth Frankenstein, and Justine Moritz – all die, after being heralded as the epitome of femininity.¹¹ They are silent and passive, receptors of the generosity or ire of the males in power around them. Thus, this novel can also be a general critique of the socially constructed gender binary, and the power dynamics it creates, between men, representing reason and culture, and women, representing emotions/morality and nature (Banerjee, 9). Shelley contest the separation of men and women from the domestic sphere by highlighting “the importance of both the ‘culturiz(ing)’ role the family plays in assimilating a child into the greater community and the humanizing impact on the individual of domestic intercourse within the family” (Banerjee, 11). She can argue against “treating the familial realm as a women’s ghetto” and for the fact “that men should commit themselves to the familial equally with women” because of the ideal created in the story “of familial bonds as both the basis of morality and the context of identity-formation” (Banerjee, 11, 12). Because of Victor’s lack of concern for the creature he’d create and negligence in integrating the Monster into society or protecting him from society, as is theoretically the duty a parent has to their child,

¹¹ Meaning, heralded as virtuous, beautiful, dutiful women who’s angelic nature is revered and placed on a pedestal, while lacking agency, a voice, and the ability to make the men around them heed their words. Victor often notes how being with Elizabeth brings him a semblance of peace after creating the Monster, yet he never tells her about his creation, depriving her of any power to help, because she is too good to be bothered with such messy matters.

Shelley can point out the flaw of silencing women even in “their” own designated realm of control. Whether or not one chooses to read this novel and argue that letting Elizabeth know of the Monster’s creation may have saved several lives in that her clearly angelic disposition would push her to empathize with the Monster and try to help him, the significance of parental empathy towards their child for the peaceful security of both the child and society is at issue in this novel. Victor failing in this parental duty, and failing to ask for help with them from anyone in any way, shows the far-reaching negative impacts of denying the child one creates the empathy they duly deserve. By combining the importance of men and women in the domestic sphere, emphasizing the combined importance of their role as loving and benevolent guides for their children, thereby contributing to the social integration and personal identification of their children, Shelley can begin to break down several social norms by equalizing men and women in both spheres.

Other views of the morals and lessons from *Frankenstein* strictly focus on other general social dichotomies. It’s been noted how Mary Shelley directly critiques Rousseauian philosophy in the novel. She emphasizes that compassion leads beings, such as the Monster, to desire society, which “marks a fluidity between the state of nature and that of culture, and undoes the conceptual hiatus between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ that is the cornerstone of Rousseau’s philosophy” (Banerjee, 14). However, she does agree with the *Second Discourse* in the belief that “isolation from nature seems to be the permanent price man pays for his consciousness and his creativity,” as neither author offers a solution to how humanity can return to a state of nature or something similar (Cantor, 121).¹² Furthermore, she also argues against the Enlightenment belief that reason should be the true, moral guide of all actions “by insisting on the importance of

¹² This is further evidenced in the novel when Victor takes time to appreciate nature as a way to rejuvenate his soul. These parts of the novel are hiatuses from the plot – at no point does an important event or conversation take place while Victor feels at one or is appreciating nature. He must leave these moments for the plot to continue.

real-world/cultural contingencies” such as the ethical implications of reason’s dictates (Banerjee, 7). Again, Victor’s failure to consider the personal consequences to the Monster and human society in his creation of the Monster is an example of the dangers of reason, which would dictate solving the scientific puzzle of creating life for the betterment of human kind and scientific progress, when given free reign without considering the implications and effects of these actions on others. If Victor had taken time to consider how his Monster would be received by the populace, and how he would react to that populace, Victor may have realized it is better to make life the natural way, which would have spared the lives of: Elizabeth, Justine, his brother William, and Henry Clerval, his best friend. Again, having empathy for another creature, whether living or hypothetical, and considering the consequences of one’s actions on others would have created a better outcome for society as a whole. Lastly, in a commentary on Romanticism itself, on “the idealistic refusal to accept the facts of human nature,” Victor and the Monster “are symbols of the Romantic revolt against the human condition,” a tragic story that dramatizes “the tragedy of Romanticism itself” (Cantor, 132). For Mary Shelley, the dangers of letting idealism blind one to reality lies in the damage it does to those around the Promethean rebel, as the novel only too well portrays.

I will offer one more interpretation as a bridge between the two green-skinned rebels of this essay. The issues of colonization arise in several ways in this novel, from the idealistic Henry Clerval discussing traveling to India for adventure and economic gain, to the Monster promising Victor to travel to the least humanly populated region he could think of – South America – to the fact that this novel was written in the 1800s, a period of transitioning from colonization to imperialization. Thus, it isn’t difficult to read the Monster as more than just a child with poor parenting or a representation of harmful effects of keeping women out of society;

the Monster is also a symbol to represent “the position of an alien being in an uncomprehending community,” whether colonized immigrant or colonized at the colony (Cantor, 129). His repeated social rejection, based on his appearance, and the corruption this causes can be likened to the treatment and reactions of the colonized or other types of social minorities. Elphaba, for similar reasons, also represents the victims of social oppression and those who fight that oppression.

Truthfully, Elphaba isn't the only one in the musical who fulfills this role, though she is the most accessible. Since her struggle isn't just a social cause, but a personal struggle to find identity and belonging, it's no surprise that “*Wicked*'s producers... emphatically stress its universality, asserting that Elphaba's 'difference' stands in for all difference” (MacDonald, 200). She can stand for women, ethnic minorities, the disabled, immigrants, etc. Furthermore, in getting to care for Elphaba, the audience not only identifies with her but learns to identify with the “kinds of people that we would not ordinarily encounter” outside the theatre, preparing them to be empathetic and respectful during those encounters (MacDonald, 203). In fact, a very easy parallel to make is between Elphaba and immigrants to a new society, like the Monster, since “Immigrants moving to America as well as Americans migrating to urban centres often experience similar feelings and expectations of (job) opportunities, skill development and a sense of belonging” (MacDonald, 204-205). This desire to find a new home in a new location comes with its own perils, and Elphaba's struggles for acceptance throughout her journeys in Oz depict the “failed promise of success, and the associated costs inspired by the promised land” (MacDonald, 205-206). For an individual, Elphaba represents a way to navigate these trials without losing one's identity, beliefs, or values. She presents an example of how to deal with this type of suffering by retaining empathy, by refusing to become spiteful or malevolent.

To take a step further than in *Frankenstein*, *Wicked's* Animals are also direct representatives of marginalized peoples, as the show is a call to establish empathy to marginalized groups in order to fight for their rights. Their plight in both the *Wicked* novel and musical portrays a land “where the mistrust of anyone different alienates and victimizes many innocent people,” which was the intent of playwright Stephen Schwartz. This is the way one Dr. Dillamond, William Youmans, described his interpretation of the social significance and symbolism of his role: “It’s pretty clear that Dr. Dillamond represents the Jews in World War II: You know, being forced from his profession first, and then gradually marginalized, and then finally imprisoned and abused” (Cote, 49). However, it isn’t hard to take this comparison one step further, “given the prejudice still faced by many minority groups, particularly in the heated aftermath of 9/11, *Wicked* can be read as an allegory for more recent, even current political events” (Boyd, 98). The Animals can represent, in our time, Jews, African Americans, Muslims, Immigrants and Refugees, and the LGBTQ+ Community (to name a few). At its core, the plight of the Animals is a discussion in power – the power to tell a story and declare it fact. It is a representation on hegemony, or “the ability of the dominant or institutional group to persuade or coerce a subordinate group to accept its own oppression because there is significant benefit for the subordinate group by doing so” (Schrader and Schuykill). For the Animals, that is accepting the loss of their rights, their occupations, their status as citizens, and their eventual de-evolution, to ensure their own lives. Dr. Dillamond even emphasizes this point in his history class by explaining the major events in Ozian history that has led up to the growing persecution of the Animals. The point of this comparison serves “as a reminder for audience members that there have been many social groups throughout history that have been unfairly blamed and persecuted for a nation’s problems” (Schrader and Schuykill). Moreover, it further reminds the audience

that, like Elphaba, all it takes is empathizing with one individual, even if it is just being able to identify with their plight, which can serve to establish the altruistic desire to fight for their rights. Her relationship with Dr. Dillamond guides her motives and actions for the rest of the musical. Taking this relationship a step further, Elphaba's involvement in the plight of the Animals, as an ally, also points out the perils that allies subject themselves too in order to help minority groups:

The Lion's story¹³ suggests that Elphaba has become a scapegoat for her own cause. Animals whom she has tried to help have blamed her for their troubles. Some social protest leaders, like Elphaba, have become a scapegoat for their own causes. One figure in U.S. history that exemplifies this is abolitionist John Brown. Brown became a leader of antislavery guerillas and fought against proslavery attacks. In retribution for a proslavery attack, Brown brutally murdered five settlers in a proslavery town ("John Brown"). While some abolitionists, like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, praised Brown ("John Brown"), other leaders, like Abraham Lincoln, disapproved of Brown's actions and believed he was insane (Sandburg). Brown became one of the most controversial figures of his time and has been partially credited with starting the Civil War (Frye). Like Brown, Elphaba is not only a scapegoat for her opposition, but for those who support her cause. Elphaba reminds audience members that one of the risks of fighting against hegemony is becoming a scapegoat. (Schrader and Schuyllkill)

But instead of using this message to deter audience members from social justice activism, Elphaba inspires the audience to take that risk, knowing that regardless of the outcomes they are acting for good. This, the musical argues, is what truly matters and what will help society.

The best way, though, both stories emphasize the overarching singular message that empathy is the cure to society's multifaceted corruptive nature is through their use of layered narrative structure. *Frankenstein* begins with sailor/adventurer Walton's one-sided correspondence to his sister, Margaret, telling her the tale of the Monster via conversations with Victor. This frame is complicated both by Victor's story and by Victor telling Walton the

¹³ While at Shiz someone brought in a lion cub in a cage to show the class where an animal's "rightful" place is. Elphaba steals the cage, and with Fiyero, frees the lion cub. In the song "The March of the Witch Hunters," Boq explains that the Cowardly Lion is that lion cub, and because Elphaba freed him, instead of letting him "fight his own battles," she made him a coward.

Monster's story, all of which is recorded by Walton in these letters. Though Walton berates the Monster at the end of the novel, he leaves judgment of both the Monster and Victor up to his sister, and by relation the reader. The multiple narrative structure of the novel strips the Monster of the ability to defend himself as his motives and actions are retold and, presumably, altered by the two other men who tell it. This doesn't mean the entire novel should be chucked as biased lies; the narrative structure engages the reader to question the biases of all three narrators while being able to generally accept the events and messages of the story as true. This novel plays with the use of empathy not just to identify with all the characters,¹⁴ thereby recognizing that the reader themselves could become any of these characters, but also with the less vocalized use of empathy as a means to question the narratives being espoused to seek the truth behind the biases. Walton's lack of judgment for the Monster depicts both uses of empathy, balancing what Victor has claimed the Monster has done with the final parting words of the Monster, which mostly sound regretful. Thus, Walton teaches the reader to utilize and learn from both forms of empathy, self-identification and skepticism. He turns his ship home; he spreads this story as a way to teach others these lessons; he is the character the reader is meant to identify with at the end of the novel, for he is the one the reader should be inspired to become – someone who can learn from other's mistakes via empathizing with them and actively decide to improve the social situation around them from that knowledge.

Similarly in structure, *Wicked* is framed within Glinda's memories, as she retells Elphaba's story. This highlights how, like the Monster, Elphaba "loses agency in her own story" (Boyd, 114). Glinda must be the one to tell Elphaba's story, to give it any credence or plausibility, because she is initially, innately taken for granted as being "Glinda the Good" and

¹⁴ Yes, that includes Victor.

ends the show as the only character in a position and with a desire to do good. However, as the ending lines of the show reveal, though Glinda may have the knowledge of Elphaba's goodness, she cannot share that truth. As the Munchkins' repetition of "Wicked" drown out the "good" in Elphaba and Glinda's last "I have been changed for good," the reality of Elphaba's place in Ozian history is cemented (Cast, "Finale"); Elphaba will forever be the Wicked Witch, though she never acted with wickedness. Glinda cannot free Elphaba of this title and must accept it in order to keep the favor of the citizens of Oz and begin to undo the social damage the Wizard has caused. Like with *Frankenstein*, *Wicked*'s characters are fleshed out enough for the audience to recognize how easy it is to become any of these characters; and like *Frankenstein*, it is the narrator, at the end of the story, that the audience not only empathizes but should identify with. Glinda, with the knowledge of the experience of persecution suffered by both the Animals and Elphaba because of the Wizard, can take that knowledge and put it to social use – she can begin the slow process of reversing the marginalization of the Animals. She may not be able to rewrite history, but that doesn't mean later generations are as limited. She just has to start Oz on the path to allow that revision in the future. Her empathy for, and her self-identification and friendship with, Elphaba matures Glinda, empowering her with a better moral grounding and a desire to take up Elphaba's activism and succeed where Elphaba could not. The audience can likewise take this story about empathy and follow in Glinda's bubble, creating positive social change even with what limited power they possess.

That's not to say, however, that Glinda's story should be accepted without skepticism. After all, Elphaba is her best friend and the Wizard did cause her death. This would undoubtedly shape how Glinda remembers the past and how she would share it. Even in this benign case, though the story is being told from a character feeling empathy for the character they are

discussing, it is important to utilize empathy's healthy criticism to recognize the biases of this narration, recognizing that Glinda may distort what she is remembering, in a kind of reverse Walton – out of love for Elphaba and hatred or dislike of the Wizard. As with *Frankenstein*, this does not mean the entire show should be chucked as elegiac nonsense; the general events and messages of this show can be accepted while the audience members question the authenticity of the characterizations therein. Again, it is a quest for truth that this tale of empathy highlights, accepting that this quest will circularly question the story itself. It is up to each audience member to decide what the truth is from his or her own analysis of the tale.

The Wizard himself focuses on the issues of storytelling and power in his song “Wonderful.” Before that analysis, however, it is important to highlight a bit more about the Wizard and his relationship with Elphaba, since he parallels Victor with the Monster in several ways. Throughout the First Act Elphaba speaks of the Wizard with reverence and awe, as most Ozians do.¹⁵ When she finally meets him, he sings to her “A Sentimental Man,” relating how his desire to be a father underpins his political decisions. As lyricist Stephen Schwartz explains

No matter how intentionally manipulating and falsely emotional the music in “A Sentimental Man,” on some level the Wizard does mean it. He really wanted to be a father. He is honestly sentimental, even though he's a villain. And, at the end of *Wicked*, when he realizes that he destroyed his own daughter – it's so devastating to him, he's willing to pack it in and leave Oz. (Cote, 80)

When Elphaba realizes that he is the cause of the harm to the Animals she challenges him about his parenting style by claiming that the Wizard “lied to [the citizens of Oz]” (Menzel,

¹⁵ During the Wiz-O-Mania part of “One Short Day,” the citizens of the Emerald City – the city the Wizard told them to build as a capital – sing: “Who's the mage/ Whose major itinerary/ Is making all Oz merrier?/ Who's the sage/ Who sagely sailed in to save/ Our posteriers?/ Whose enthuse for hot air ballooning/ Has all of Oz honeymooning?/ Woo oo oo/ Wiz-n't he Wonderful?/ Our Wonderful Wizard!” This verse not only serves to set the Wizard as a wise and benevolent ruler, but as a husband-figure to the nation of Oz, and adds to his later claim to be a father to Oz's citizens.

“Wonderful”). Understanding that this encounter could be a way to regain her trust, the Wizard begins “intellectually seducing Elphaba, who is exhausted and isolated” to join his side (Cote, 85). The originator of the role, Joel Grey, described the Wizard’s motives this song: “I had this idea that the Wizard loved Elphaba so much, but never realized that she’s his daughter. His connection with her was very important. In that scene, she’s so dark and angry and thinks the Wizard is such a bad guy, I just had to charm her somehow. So I get her to dance with me. And dance with joy” (Cote, 44-45). In a campy and carefree tune the Wizard blatantly explains the malleability of history, starting by stating, “Where I come from, we believe all sorts of things that aren't true. We call it History” (Grey, “Wonderful”). He continues, singing, “A man's called a traitor / Or liberator. / A rich man's a thief / Or philanthropist. / Is one a crusader / Or ruthless invader? / It's all in which label / Is able to persist,” reminding her that public opinion trumps truth, merit, and motive (Grey, “Wonderful”).¹⁶ He promises her that “the most celebrated/ are the rehabilitated,” reassuring her that if she joins him she could still be accepted by society as she dreamed, because he’d deem it (Grey, “Wonderful”). So although *Wicked* “serves as a warning to audience members about the dangers of apathy and the necessity of taking action,” to help the persecuted, it also poignantly elaborates on the dubious nature of all history, any story, and basic common knowledge as not a product of truth but of popular consent and belief (Schrader and Schuykill). For the Wizard, social truth is not about empathy, but about what is easiest and more palatable for the public to accept; usually, this denies both empathy and humanity to the outsiders – like Elphaba and the Animals – by blaming them for any and every social ill. This

¹⁶ This is a continuation of the same sentiment from Glinda’s Act One song, “Popular.” As Schwartz describes: “it’s also political. Glinda refers to the fact that politicians and heads of state get by not because they’re particularly smart, but because people would like to hang out with them” (Cote, 79). Both emphasize the importance of social acceptance, over merit, trustworthiness, or experience, for rising to power, cementing that power, and ensuring fame.

refers back to the issue of the rebel vs. the tyrant that Victor and the Monster face, in that the publicly accepted view of history scapegoats individuals to be dethroned instead of dismantling or revamping the flawed social institutions that allow for inequalities and oppression. The Wizard understands the power of public opinion and forgoes empathizing with a group of his citizen-children to turn public opinion into the means for cementing his control over Oz. The Wizard's tale ends as Glinda helps him realize that Elphaba is his child, and as noted above, he leaves Oz as punishment both for his power and child abuse. Unlike Victor, the Wizard does regret his actions, but only upon accepting his responsibility as Elphaba's father; he would not have regretted his actions had she merely remained one of his child-citizens.

In repeatedly comparing his political rule to that of a parent, the Wizard brings up one main message to take from *Wicked*, *Frankenstein*, and the *Second Discourse*, one that underpins them all. As stated earlier, Rousseau argues that the bedrock for all inequalities begins with the creation of family units, which aggregates the further into larger societies one goes. Detailing how the individual actions of the characters affect the larger social network of their stories, both *Frankenstein* and *Wicked* agree with Rousseau by showing how the family could be the basis for poor morality, social adjustment, and identity creation. However, they also argue against him; these stories of empathy between individuals, or lack thereof, beginning from the home and expanding into society, argue that the moral grounding that should come from the empathy of family members should and can be replicated, if not present, by supportive friendships, ensuring individuals retain their inner altruism and benevolence, instead of becoming the corrupt monsters society has the propensity to create.

These are stories that take the metaphor that "the state is like a family" and question the assumptions that this is a good thing by point out how horrible families can be. This is why the

interpretations of the Monster and Elphaba as representations of oppressed groups, from women to minorities to the colonized, works. By the logic of this metaphor, Victor, Elphaba's non-biological father, and the Wizard represent the political leaders, or at least the groups in power. Victor rises to power – the power to create and decide the fate of a life – through animating the Monster; Elphaba's non-biological father is the governor of Munchkinland (a position that is apparently inheritable since Nessarose assumes the role after her father dies); the Wizard, as he describes in “Wonderful,” is “a mediocrity thrust into prominence,” or an accidental total despot (Cote, 85). Victor, after achieving his power, is constantly in fear of what the consequences of this newfound power will bring, and more importantly in fear of losing control of that power in losing control of the Monster. It's not hard to conceive of a few European folk looking at the economic and political empire they created, built on the backs of the harshly subjected colonized (and later imperialized) people, who feared the chaos and the violence that would inevitably come about when those they oppressed decided they deserved better treatment. Moreover, the Monster, arguing for Victor to fulfill his societal role and help the Monster find a society he can be happy in, doesn't just have to represent the colonized. The Monster can represent women or other marginalized members of society, such as the poor. He claims the empathy demanded by the subjects of the party in power, and represents the negative consequences of denying that empathy. He represents the danger of a rebel fighting a person instead of the system, losing his own empathy and the ability to see that what is truly to blame for his oppression is not necessarily just one individual but an entire social system at work.

The Wizard, more so than Elphaba's non-biological father, is an easier and better representation of this metaphor. Again, in the song “A Sentimental Man” and in “Wonderful,” the Wizard emphasizes to Elphaba that he really wants a family, but because he doesn't have

one, he rules Oz as if they were his children. This is a mentality that inherently paints any leader as benevolent and moral, as it is logically expected that they will use the same care and guidance for the nation as they would for their own child. Regardless of how honest this repeated sentiment is, the Wizard also depicts the dark side of ruling and parenthood – some children are not treated with the same love as the others. This is evidenced not just in his negative treatment of Elphaba and positive treatment of Glinda, depending on which one obeys him, but also in his treatment of the Animals. Like the less favorite, rebellious, or even illegitimate child, the Animals are neglected and abused as sub-citizen creatures, forced into positions of servitude and silence. The oppression of one group of people by sowing fear into the hearts of everyone else is how another group can stay in power, and David Garrison, one Wizard, realizes this is exactly how the Wizard intends to run Oz: “The only way to hold onto power is to convince people that they ought to be afraid of something. But of course like all good villains, he doesn’t think of himself as the villain. Everybody in the show, to a certain extent, is swimming in those morally dangerous waters, but it’s Elphaba who makes the ethical choice” (Cote, 45). Where the Wizard deprives empathy to the Animals, and teaches all of Oz to follow suit, Elphaba rejects this message and sows empathy for the Animals.

This is why the song “Wonderful” is the most socially and politically charged song in the show. It elaborates not just on the problematic implications of substituting the state for the family, and vice versa, but on the unquestioned assumption that what leaders and history tells us is right. “Wonderful” clearly defines one core problem of the show – the difference between reality and perception – because “The Wizard talks about how the truth is a lie agreed upon by society” (Cote, 85). Yes, the Wizard is trying to coax Elphaba to his side once again, using acceptance like baiting a child with candy, by telling her it’s the powerful who dictate what the

masses think, if they can put it into clear-cut and morally unambiguous images; images that are so convenient and satisfying no one would want to question them. He, as the center of power and having created an image of himself as an omnipotent, omnibenevolent, and omniscient leader, can change the way Elphaba is remembered because he has the masses' support and acceptance. All she has to do is give up who she is, her morals, and her voice. The audience empathizes with Elphaba because of this difficult decision, and in seeing her make the right choice – not just socially, to continue fighting the Wizard, but personally, to stay true to herself – the audience sees that her choice is more of a victory than the actual success of her endeavors is. She inspires the audience to do and accept the same in their own lives, valuing truth and morality over power and acceptance. In this way, though both stories share the same messages – that the family, society, and the political regime can be corrupt, that empathy both guides individuals to moral amelioration and to the truth, and that regardless of the source the stories told need to be examined for biases and inaccuracies – the embodiments of these messages are opposites. The Monster is someone to learn how not to be. Elphaba is someone to emulate.

Thus, the Monster, as the representative of the corruption of Society and being a Social Man, is a warning; Elphaba, as the Savage-Social Man able to recognize when society is wrong and desiring to fix its problems, is a role model. The former shows the reader how not to give into ignorance, hate, and revenge by detailing the consequences of that path, both on the familial and social levels; the latter shows the audience that even though the personal and social costs of morality and benevolence are high, ultimately they are more rewarding as both the individual and those around them learn to be better people and own up to their mistakes, slowly amending society for good. Both narratives center on the use, or lack thereof, of empathy as a way to bridge the gap between different people, expanding this empathy to the wider socio-political

realm. At the heart of the family and political metaphors in all three texts is a call to recognize those typically “othered” as not separated from but connected to oneself. Doing so, the hopeful underlying message of these texts claims, will prevent the disastrous effects of parental neglect, fear-mongering, power-abuse, and social oppression.

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