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## Modern myth in performance: claiming identity through a reading of fantasy withcraft

Jessica Satterwhite Gray  
*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

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MODERN MYTH IN PERFORMANCE:  
CLAIMING IDENTITY THROUGH A READING  
OF FANTASY WITCHCRAFT

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

The Department of Theatre

by

Jessica Satterwhite Gray  
B.A., University of North Carolina, 1999  
M.A., Florida State University, 2001  
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This project was born from the love and support of many. I give my sincere thanks...

To my beloved Rhye and sweet girl Ariana for giving me the space and support to manifest this work. May our family grow in love and prosperity.

To my mom and dad for raising me to be a spiritual seeker. May the love and understanding between us increase.

To the Witches, Pagans and others who are forging ground in this new religious tradition. May we continue to stir the cauldron and change reality as we know it.

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Whatever power we achieve through these sincere practices, may it be for the benefit of all. As above, so below. So mote it be!

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## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I create a Wiccan dramaturgical lens to analyze three key fantasy sites: *The Wizard of Oz* film and stage adaptations (especially the Broadway musical *Wicked*), *The Chronicles of Narnia* film and theatrical adaptations, and the *Harry Potter* films and paratheatrical adaptations. These three fantasy stories have significant cultural impact and strong images of folkloric witches. My alternative reading shows how a subgroup can appropriate popular images for their own identity formation. I will analyze how signs, themes, and narrative tropes that otherwise seem ancillary or even anti-witch become highlighted and privileged, creating a different but equally legitimate counter-text for the Wiccan spectator (or for any spectator looking through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens).

I model my primary methodology on Stacy Wolf's *A Problem Like Maria*, where she gives a "queer" reading of popular musicals. Following Wolf's lead, a Wiccan reading of these texts highlights how the witch images offer opportunities for Witchcraft practitioners to perform their own faith identity. Using the theories of Neo-Pagan identity as developed by academics well-grounded in the field of Witchcraft studies, I distill nine specific "identity markers" in three categories to locate and describe Wiccan spectatorship. After grounding my methodology in performance studies in my introduction, I explain the relevant Wiccan history, beliefs and practices in my first chapter. In my second chapter, I analyze "Wiccan culture" (relationship to other faith groups and society) in the film *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and the musical *Wicked*. In my second chapter, I discuss "Wiccan beliefs" (theology) through a close reading of the film *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (2005) and the stage musical *Narnia*. In my fourth chapter, I identify Wiccan "practices" (the use of costumes, tools, and space in rituals) as found in the *Harry Potter* films and paratheatrical activities. In my final chapter, I make conclusions about this type of subcultural performance of identity and introduce the concept of ritual innovation

based on “modern myth.” I argue that performance of fantasy witch images can be a tactical syncretism that alters/assimilates a new authenticity, bridging ancient folklore to modern religious identity.

## INTRODUCTION: WITCHCRAFT AND PERFORMANCE

What does it mean to identify as a Witch<sup>1</sup> in an age of secular skepticism? In August 2010, *Newsweek* writer David Graham listed “Witchcraft” as one of the top ten “Dumb Things Americans Believe.” Accompanied by a photo of two iconic witches from the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, Graham claims, “It seems obvious that it's not a good idea to put too much stock in witchcraft. But it turns out that 21 percent of Americans believe there are real sorcerers [sic], conjurers, and warlocks out there.” What does this say to those who claim the title “Witch” as their religious identity? Is he equating their religion with *The Wizard of Oz*? In the fall of 2010, senate hopeful Christine O'Donnell was shown in a clip from an old *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher* as having “dabbled into witchcraft.” Her description of a “picnic on a satanic altar” upset religious Witches and Christian conservatives alike. In response, she circulated a video insisting “I’m not a witch, I’m you” (to which, many Witches responded, “You’re not me.”). The entire controversy illustrates how a large number of people still think there’s something wrong with being a Witch.<sup>2</sup>

Religious Witches claim the label “Witch” as part of their religious subculture of shared aesthetics and practices, but the term has so much historical and cultural baggage that it raises suspicions from the secular world as much as it does from those of other religions. Historian Ronald Hutton calls modern Witchcraft “one of the most sensational and radically

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout my dissertation, I distinguish modern, religious Witchcraft from fantasy witch images through the use of capitalization. The only exception to this is when the word “witch” is part of the proper name of a fantasy witch, as it is with both the Wicked Witch of the West of Oz and Narnia’s White Witch.

<sup>2</sup> Many Wiccans and Neo-Pagans responded to what Jason Pitzl-Waters called O'Donnell’s “Dabble-gate.” See his blog “The Wild Hunt” for many comments, and Youtube.com for Witches’ response videos. In an article in October 2010, O'Donnell made light of the entire controversy and responded that she will not be dressing as a witch for Halloween. In that interview she again invoked *The Wizard of Oz*: “I was thinking about just going as Dorothy,” O'Donnell said. “I killed the witch. There you go.” (Madison).

countercultural of the world's mystery religions, which had taken to itself the glamour and fear associated with the traditional stereotype of the witch" (Hutton, *Witches* 260). Some words and images have such powerful associations that they become like magnets, both attracting and repelling at the same time. For example, the term "queer" has been claimed by many people with alternative sexualities, but the word itself still carries a negative connotation for much of the dominant culture. The word "Witch" conjures up images of power, seduction, and unexplained phenomena. A connotation of danger can be both empowering and fear-inducing. As folklorist Sabina Magliocco explains, "Embracing the *W* word may have empowered American witches to validate their intuition, sexuality, and emotions, but it has also made them the targets of prejudice, misunderstanding, and even hatred by those for whom the traditional meaning of the word has not changed" (72). To claim the name and image of "Witch" carries many risks.

Though validated by the courts as a legitimate religion,<sup>3</sup> many Pagans and Witches feel a need to hide their religious identity for fear of persecution, judgment, and mockery. Those who are open about their religious identity face discrimination in the workplace, negative repercussions from family, and alienation from friends. Within this fight for legitimacy, some believe that popular fantasy witch images trivialize their religious choices and resist them. Yet, at the same time many self-identified Witches are drawn to the fantasy witch images, occasionally wearing the pointed hats, striped stockings, and dancing in the "besom brigade" (a dance with brooms). Some decorate their homes with witch images, including the Halloween-

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<sup>3</sup> In 1985 through court case *Dettmer vs. Landon*, Wicca was established as a legal religion with full constitutional protection, though the court decision included the following language: "While there are certainly aspects of Wiccan philosophy that may strike most people as strange or incomprehensible, the mere fact that a belief may be unusual does not strip it of constitutional protection" ("The Legal Basis for Wicca").



type signs claiming “The Witch is In,” “Witch Crossing,” or “Parking for Witches Only: All Others will be Toad.” A song called “Three Witches” by the Neo-Pagan group Spiral Rhythms combines the text of *Macbeth’s* witches with two traditional Wiccan texts and a few references to *The Wizard of Oz*. Another song, Crow Women’s “We Won’t Sleep Tonight” (an adaptation of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight” where the background is “A Wicca-way” rather than “A Wim-a-Way”), also celebrates the stereotypical image with “cauldrons bubbling” and “flying brooms.” Both of these songs are performed by Witches to laughing crowds at Neo-Pagan festivals.

The image of “witch” as it developed in the past century in American society is highly complex and represented in a broad variety of media. “Witch” costumes rank on the list of most popular Halloween costumes for adults, children, and even pets every year according to the National Retail Federation (Grannis). Popular television shows, like *Bewitched*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* and *Charmed*, show a sensational type of witchcraft that has little relation to religious Witchcraft, while films like *Practical Magic* and *The Craft* include a few accurate details but horror-quality results.<sup>4</sup> Wiccan characters and themes have more recently been featured in off-off-Broadway plays and musicals. In Joshua Conkel’s *The Chalk Boy* (2008), teenage girls experiment with Wiccan rituals as a type of titillation.<sup>5</sup> David Hein and Irene Sankoff wrote *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding* (produced in Toronto 2009 and New York 2010) based on his own mother’s experience, but the musical lacks any real explanation of her spiritual search and conversion to Wicca.<sup>6</sup> The most recent play about Wicca, Gene Ruffini’s *A Process of Elimination* produced by Theater for a New City at the Cino Theatre

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<sup>4</sup> Marion Gibson analyzes the inherent sexist imagery in these shows and films in her book *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*.

<sup>5</sup> See the review by Dana Lang, “Outside the Lines.” While the imagery of the play connects it to Wicca and one of the characters is supposedly Wiccan, the religion is not really a significant part of the play.

<sup>6</sup> In a review, Matthew Murray criticizes *My Mother’s Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding* for offering “local color when we need deep psychological and spiritual exploration” and serves primarily as a platform for the gay marriage debate.

(December 2010-January 2011), claims to include an “authentic Wiccan initiation” as part of a murder mystery.<sup>7</sup> Yet, in advertising the play, Theater for a New City uses images of folkloric witches from woodcuts and promises that audiences will be “bewitched.” Wiccan characters also show up as short gags in mainstream movies. In *Baby Mama* (2008), a Methodist couple is concerned about their “Wiccan” surrogate mother until she “puts a spell” on them.<sup>8</sup> In *He’s Just Not That Into You* (2009), a caricature of a Wiccan hits on the main character at a wedding, boring her senseless by talking nonstop about his religion. While these examples show that Wicca is becoming more well-known in mainstream culture, they still fall short of accurate representations.

A more faithful portrayal of religious Witchcraft can be read in a number of recent young adult book series, including Isobel Bird’s *Circle of Three* series and Cate Tiernan’s *Sweep* series, but these books have had marginal popularity beyond their teenage audience. The most popular witch images are found in more traditional fantasy, a genre that especially appeals to Witches.<sup>9</sup> The movie *The Wizard of Oz* has had significant impact on American culture, and the recent Broadway musical *Wicked* reinforces that film’s stereotypical presentation of witchcraft - the witch, green skin and black dress, cape flying and pointed hat, holding a broom and defying gravity. The *Harry Potter* phenomenon about a school for young witches and wizards brought fantasy children’s books to the *New York Times* Best Seller list, and whole covens of religious Witches gathered to attend release parties and movie openings, sharing a love of fantasy witch images despite the stereotypes. *The Chronicles of Narnia* (first in books and now in film) also

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<sup>7</sup> See Martin Denton’s review where he claims a program note assures of the ritual’s authenticity, but criticizes the play for “set in the present day... I suspect the witchcraft elements might feel more persuasive if there were a more timeless quality to the storytelling.”

<sup>8</sup> In the film it suggests that Wiccans routinely “eat the placenta” of their babies, which has caused actual confusion among some about whether or not this is a real Wiccan practice (which it is not).

<sup>9</sup> See Magliocco’s “The Romance of Subdominance: Creating Oppositional Culture” in *Witching Culture* for a more detailed explanation of how Wiccans are attracted to fantasy.

appeal to Witches, though to a lesser extent than the others due to the perceived Christian allegory. When Witches engage with these stories, they have the opportunity to recognize aspects of the “Witch” identity in them, though many would deny their significance to the religious tradition. To some, fantasy images of witches trivialize their “serious” religion. As a theatre scholar, I search for deeper meaning in all forms of entertainment, including the fantasy stories both rejected and embraced by Witches.

In this dissertation, I assert an alternative, “Wiccan” reading of the popular staged images of witches and wizards. Specifically, I use the categories of Wiccan culture, beliefs and practices to create a dramaturgical lens which I use to analyze three key fantasy sites: *The Wizard of Oz* film and stage adaptations (especially the Broadway musical *Wicked*), *The Chronicles of Narnia* film and theatrical adaptations, and the *Harry Potter* films and paratheatrical<sup>10</sup> adaptations. These three stories have significant cultural impact and strong images related to Witchcraft according to my reading. While my study focuses specifically on fantasy witch images as viewed through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the practice of an alternative reading based on subgroup identity could be used by other subgroups as well. This study illustrates the practices of subgroup identity formation and shows how any subgroup can appropriate and interpret popular images for their own purposes. From the perspective of audience response theory, this study expands on the idea that each member of any audience views performance through their own identity lens, privileging certain images and interpreting according to their own identity needs.

## **Methodology**

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<sup>10</sup> The term “paratheatrical” is commonly used in performance studies to refer to activities not necessarily intended as performance but which can be analyzed as performance. Common examples include religious rituals, sporting events, and fan activities like the ones I discuss.

I model my methodology on Stacy Wolf's *A Problem Like Maria*, where she gives a "queer" reading of popular musicals in response to heteronormative readings. In her study, Wolf establishes an alternative spectator – the lesbian/feminist spectator – who reads mainstream (ostensibly non-lesbian) texts from the perspective of that imaginary spectator. Following Wolf's lead, I create a Wiccan dramaturgical lens and then read ostensibly non-Wiccan, witch-themed texts from that perspective. I argue that a Wiccan reading highlights how present-day Witchcraft practitioners can claim the fantasy wizard/witch images in these texts. Unlike Wolf, who bases her analysis in a well-developed field of queer performance studies, very little performance studies scholarship has been done from a Wiccan perspective. I must create my own guidelines for my Wiccan reading. Yet, as Clifford Geertz claims, "Cultural analysis is (or should be) guessing at meanings, assessing the guesses, and drawing explanatory conclusions from the better guesses..." (20). Using the theories of Neo-Pagan identity development as developed by academics well-grounded in the field of Witchcraft studies, I distill nine specific "identity markers" in three categories to locate and describe Wiccan spectatorship. Originally coined by anthropologist Anthony Cohen to define boundaries between social groups, the term "identity markers" is most often used in performance studies to designate signs or signals that identify members of a subculture to other members of the same subculture.<sup>11</sup> As most of my readers will be unfamiliar with Wiccan culture, beliefs and practices, I must first define the Wiccan dramaturgical lens as clearly as possible. I will then analyze each text through this dramaturgical lens, claiming fantasy witch images as part of "identity" and as a source of performed spectatorship.

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<sup>11</sup> See Cohen's *Signifying Identities* for the term's original usage. One example of its use in performance studies is "Bodies on the Line: Identity Markers Among Mexican Street Youth" by Herrera, Jones, and Benetéz.

In this project I will be using the term “Witch” much like Wolf uses the term “lesbian.” She explains in her introduction, “The spectator imagined here is feminist and a lesbian, a position that can be inhabited by any spectator willing to look and hear from a lesbian point of view” (5). In a similar way, I argue that any spectator can use this Wiccan dramaturgical lens to view fantasy witch images from a Wiccan perspective. Wolf specifies that she is not arguing that the women performers she analyzes are lesbians, nor that it is necessary for a reader to be a lesbian to understand the point of view. I also do not argue that L. Frank Baum, C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling, or any of the performers in film or theatrical versions of their stories practice Witchcraft as a religion. Rather, I argue that viewing these fantasy performance texts from the dramaturgical lens of an imagined “Wiccan spectator” allows a critic to gain a new perspective on the historical and modern image of the “witch.” Wolf admits that she uses the terms “lesbian,” “feminist” and “woman” somewhat interchangeably in her book (5). I use the terms “Witch” and “Wiccan” interchangeably, though many practitioners recognize distinct differences between Witchcraft, a non-denominational practice, and Wicca, a specific Neo-Pagan “denomination.”<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Wolf clarifies that she is not suggesting all lesbians “possess an idiosyncratic or uniform viewpoint” (5). Similarly, I do not argue that all Witches or Wiccans will view these texts in the same way. There are intense and ongoing disagreements about the nature, form, function, history, and future of Wicca. Nor will I argue that Witches are the only community that creates identity through staged fantasy witch and wizard images. Strong fan communities have developed around all three of these fantasy worlds and include fans from all faiths. However, I follow Wolf’s model in reading these performance sites through

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<sup>12</sup> Wicca broadly refers to “all forms of Neo-Paganism descended from, related to, or influenced by Gerald Gardner” (Magliocco 73). Some, called “Gardnerian Witches,” claim to practice the specific traditions as taught by Gardner, while others follow a similar structure but write their own rituals based on eclectic sources. Many “Witches” do not claim association with Gardner, and some even claim an unbroken historical lineage to pre-Christian European religion. I will discuss the historical development of the modern Witchcraft movement in more depth in the first chapter.

a specific Wiccan perspective, though other identity groups (even within the larger Pagan or Witch communities) could read these same performances in drastically different ways. I situate my analysis within the broader field of performance studies, an interdisciplinary field which incorporates cultural studies, anthropology, religious theory, and some traditional theatre. Performance analysis has been applied to many different situations, from tribal rituals<sup>13</sup> to modern fan-fiction<sup>14</sup> and everything in between. In order to ground my methodology, I turn now to a brief overview of identity-based performance scholarship.

### **Performance of Identity**

The field of performance studies developed in the 1970s alongside the burgeoning civil rights movements based first on gender, then race and ethnicity, and then sexuality. These marginalized groups continue to use performance as an outlet for establishing identity and even resistance against the mainstream culture. According to performance theorist Marvin Carlson, performance of identity can be defined as “performance involved with the concerns, desires, and even the visibility of those normally excluded by race, class, or gender from consideration by the traditional theatre or indeed by modern performance, at least in its formative years” (144). Much of the field focuses on minority identities, as it is “particularly attuned to issues of place, personhood, cultural citizenship, and equity” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 51). Some of these performances are intended to strengthen solidarity amongst those within the minority identity, while others are intended to raise awareness in the broader culture. Analysis of performances among specific subgroups allows for larger analysis and interpretation of culture.

Individual identity is composed of a variety of factors. Gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, and religion are only a few of the possibilities. Thus, when a person engages with a

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<sup>13</sup> See *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* by Richard Schechner and Willa Appell, eds.

<sup>14</sup> See the work of Francesca Coppa, including “Writing Bodies in Space: Media Fanfiction as Theatrical Performance.”

performance (or, in fact, performs identity in life), each of these identity factors comes into play. However, sometimes specific aspects can be “privileged” over others. Judd Case, a scholar who blends performance analysis and religious studies, uses his analysis of a specific Latter Day Saints religious performance to “investigate the currents of national and religious culture” (212). Based on his own experience and interpretation of this performance, he argues that the audience’s recognition of actions relating to Mormonism in the performance results in “the privileging of the Mormon portion of their identities over other aspects – national, gender, economic, and racial” (213). According to Case, the audience could “read” specific meaning into the performance and it would then contribute to the audience’s performance of identity. Case further believes that “the central meanings, values, and goals of communities can be seen in religious performance” (213). Similar to the LDS church, Wicca operates in a marginalized (and politicized) space within mainstream culture. Most Wiccans have many aspects to their identities that inform their reading of popular media, but when a Wiccan views signs related to witchcraft in popular fantasy, the Wiccan spectator might privilege their Wiccan identity over other aspects of identity in the reading.

In order to create a dramaturgical lens based on identity, I must clarify the Wiccan spectator within the shifting nature of identity. In *Representations of Blackness and the Performance of Identities*, an anthropologist specializing in racial identity, Jean Muteba Rahier, posits, “Identities, whatever they may be, cannot be defined once and for all, in fixed or essentialist terms” (xv). Rahier claims identities are “constantly enacted and reenacted, performed and performed anew” (xv). Intercultural performance scholar Phillip Zarrilli agrees, “Performance as a mode of cultural action is not a simple reflection of some essentialized, fixed attributes of a static monolithic culture but an arena for the constant process of renegotiating experiences and meanings that constitute culture” (16). By engaging with performance of identity, a subgroup

creates and changes its identity from within. Yet, while identities are not utterly static over time, neither do members of a subculture simply transform identity on a whim. To truly be considered “identity” rather than just momentary curiosity, a member of a subculture must deeply identify with aspects of any given subcultural group.

Academic interest in subculture began in earnest in 1979 with Dick Hebdige’s *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. In his examination of the British “punk” culture, he semiotically explored the youth performance of identity through material culture. Simple, everyday objects “take on a symbolic dimension, becoming a form of stigmata, tokens of a self-imposed exile... we must seek to recreate the dialectic between action and reaction which renders these objects meaningful” (2). Through their “style,” which includes infinite variety, he claims that punk youth create a subculture recognizable to themselves and those in opposition. While Hebdige focuses on the significance of the punks’ material culture anthropologically, in performance analysis, theatre scholars read material objects as symbolic of metaphor and meaning. Hebdige reads these objects as having separate meanings from their traditional meanings. He explains, “Academics who adopt a semiotic approach are not alone in reading significance into the loaded surfaces of life. The existence of spectacular subcultures continually opens up those surfaces to other potentially subversive readings” (18). By using these objects in a way different from mainstream culture, these youth open the possibility of a new semiotic reading, one different from the mainstream interpretations. In performance analysis, these same objects themselves can be read based on the interpretation of the spectator.

Like the punk subculture, the current Wiccan subculture is also spectacular, subversive group which uses images familiar to mainstream culture to create identity. The image of “fantasy witch” reads as “childish” or “commercial” to many people in mainstream society (and some within the Pagan or Wiccan culture itself). Yet, the attraction to these fantasy images



draws many into the magical worldview of Witchcraft. Meaning cannot be assumed as fixed. As Hebdige explains, “the simple notion of reading the revelation of a fixed number of concealed meanings is discarded in favour of the idea of *polysemy* whereby each text is seen to generate a potentially infinite range of meanings” (117). Many performance scholars base their analysis on the long-established tradition of semiotics, the study of signs, in reading images available on stage. Ferdinand de Saussure, in his development of semiotic theory, proposed that “historical forces” can render signs “unchangeable,” as the images develop through these forces to become fixed (72). But in some cases, Saussure also argued the same sign can become mutable, resulting in “a shift in the relationship between the signified and the signifier” (75). Derrida took this theory further, exploring how any sign can be traced through its genealogy, finding the moments of change and rupture which allow us “to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations” (24). In this dissertation, I build upon the methodology of Saussure’s semiotics as it is used in performance analysis, arguing that the Wiccan spectator derives meaning specific to the Wiccan identity from images that were not necessarily intended for this purpose. By tracing the development and chains of signification I seek to find semiotic links between the fantasy images and the Wiccan interpretation of these images in performance.

A key aspect of performance studies in relation to semiotics is audience response theory. Performance scholars define performance by the presence and “validation” of an audience (Hughes-Freeland 15, Carlson 71). Yet, audiences vary greatly in their responses to any performance. In discussing audience responses to fantasy, Cheryl Harris, a scholar specializing in fantasy fandom, claims, “Once audiences were thought of as unified in their thoughts, desires, and needs – a ‘mass’ who would generally respond similarly to the same content and

whose behavior could consequently be predicted along certain lines. If this were ever true, it certainly is no longer" (4). Audiences react and interact with performances in so many different ways, often finding meaning the artists never would have imagined. Audiences actively create meaning based on their experiences, their significations, and their subcultural needs.

Performance scholar Edward Schieffelin calls the divide between performers and audience "the creative edge where reality is socially constructed" (204). When a performance is adapted from a preexisting text, this creative reality passes through several interpretations, from author to director to actor to audience. Each person in this chain of meaning chooses his or her interpretation of reality. Meaning is derived from each person's view of the world, and their views may be drastically different from each other. In order to examine meaning, we must accept that the audience may have a different interpretation based on worldview than the artists. Schieffelin continues, "The central issue of performativity, whether in ritual performance, theatrical entertainment or the social articulation of ordinary human situations is the imaginative creation of a human world" (205). This creation may begin with the artist, but ultimately the audience holds the most agency in their own responses.

A Wiccan, like those in other subgroups, will perform his or her identity differently within the Pagan community than he or she will perform (or, in fact, hide) identity in the broader culture. A group of Wiccans performs the identity of "Witch" for one another, so in a group they are more likely to privilege the images of witches within fantasy stories than they might as individuals. Also, fears of trivialization may prevent a Wiccan from exhibiting his or her identification with witch signs to those who might not understand or approve. As Schechner acknowledges, "The great big gap between what a performance is to people inside from what it is to people outside conditions all the thinking about the performance. These differences can be as great within a single culture as they are across cultural boundaries"

("Magnitudes" 27). Zarilli agrees, "Codes and conventions easily read by those within one culture may be opaque to those outside" (25). Non-Wiccan authors and artists clearly did not intend to use fantasy witch images as Wiccan "codes" or "signs." Yet, in all subcultures, Hebdige claims, "commodities can be symbolically 'repossessed' in everyday life, and endowed with implicitly oppositional meanings, by the very groups who originally produced them" (16). While the signs and symbols in modern fantasy were not intended to reflect or comment upon the Wiccan identity, by viewing these signs through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens, a spectator can find an alternative meaning drastically different from the artists' intentions. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, whose work has had great influence on performance studies, also focuses on a semiotic approach to culture. "It is a cluster of sacred symbols, woven into some sort of ordered whole, which makes up a religious system," claims Geertz (129). Through my identification of images relating to Wicca within modern fantasy performance, I will analyze how signs, themes, and narrative tropes that otherwise seem ancillary or even anti-witch become highlighted, privileged, creating a different but equally legitimate counter-text for the Wiccan spectator (or for any spectator looking through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens).

Wolf analyzes the performances and roles of Mary Martin, Ethel Merman, Julie Andrews and Barbara Streisand from a lesbian feminist perspective in her book *A Problem Like Maria*. She asserts the existence of a kind of spectator – the lesbian spectator – whose reading of a performed text 1) differs significantly from predominant readings; 2) isn't necessarily apparent to non-lesbian spectators, but 3) is nevertheless significant and worthy of general critical attention. As much as she argues that the lesbian spectator point of view can be practiced by any willing spectator, she also discusses how "an actual lesbian spectator may be unwilling to read musicals in this way" (23). She is introducing a tension inherent in subgroups between identification and aversion. Wolf's lesbian spectator identifies implicit images relating to

lesbian sexuality, but many actual lesbian spectators push against identifying with these images. Performance scholars David Román and Alberto Sandoval describe a similar dynamic in their article “Caught in the Web: Latinidad, AIDS, and Allegory in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the Musical.” Their reading focuses on an implicit “allegory” of AIDS which they determine is “imbedded” within the musical. They discuss the “pleasure of discovery” for those who recognize the implicit signs, but also the potential “disavowal” since the play never overtly refers to AIDS (570). In a similar way, many Wiccans recognize imbedded signs related to Wicca within fantasy witch performances, but some disavow these signs based on their lack of direct reference. Just as Román and Sandoval clarify the signs they see as informed spectators, I clarify and identify the signs of religious Witchcraft through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

Several performance scholars have engaged in counter-readings of mainstream texts from the perspective of minority identities. Wolf analyzes performance through a “lesbian/feminist” lens, while Román and Sandoval create a lens based on three factors: the gay subculture, the AIDS culture within that subculture, and the Latinidad cultural perspective. They argue that *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* “offers Latina/o spectators the opportunity to articulate our identities through our reception” and they identify overt “markers of Latinidad” which they recognize within the mainstream production (559). Jill Dolan reads performance texts from a feminist perspective in *Feminist Spectator as Critic*. She claims, “The feminist critic can be seen as a ‘resistant reader,’ who analyzes a performance’s meaning by reading against the grain of stereotypes” (2). Dolan recognizes that there are many different feminist theories of performance, and she explores the differences in viewing through liberal, cultural, radical, or materialism perspectives. A third study of performance from a subgroup identity perspective is Henry Bial’s *Acting Jewish: Negotiating Ethnicity on the American Stage and Screen*. In it, Bial discusses a theory of “double-coding,” where “a performance can communicate one message to

Jewish audiences while simultaneously communicating another, often contradictory message to gentile audiences” (3). Unlike Dolan, Román, and Sandoval, Bial examines the intention of Jewish performers as much as he reads the possible interpretation of audiences. Yet, he recognizes the negotiation between performer and audience in creating meaning. “The audience can only interpret what the performer gives; the performer cannot completely control the terms of that interpretation” (15). He concludes by offering “a Jewish-specific reading strategy” for viewing performance text from a Jewish perspective (138). Bial claims that his study offers a “model for theorizing the representation of other minority groups in American mass culture” (5-6). While the specifics of the Wiccan subculture are necessarily different from those based on sexuality, gender, and ethnicity,<sup>15</sup> in creating my Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I am following the examples of many performance scholars who argue that minority groups can (and do) read mainstream texts according to their own subcultural identities. I also create a model for performance scholars to read popular performance texts through any specific subgroup identity markers, whether those markers are based on religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or other subcultural formations.

### **Definition of Terms**

For the sake of clarity, I need to define some of the terms I use in this study: dramaturgy, text, mythology, fantasy, and fandom. Dramaturgy is the practice of studying the cultural and historical context of theatrical action, along with a deep analysis of the various thematic

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<sup>15</sup> Bial claims that all minority subgroups define themselves based on their adversarial relationship to the “so-called dominant culture.” (6). No two minority subgroups have identical social or political struggles, though all have similar experiences in relation to the mainstream. Bial writes, “to be a minority, whether ethnic, racial, or religious, is to be by definition marginalized, oppressed, victimized” (6). I find his study particularly helpful because the Jewish identity is based not only on ethnicity, but also on religious performance: “While any child born of a Jewish mother is a Jew, the process of making oneself fully Jewish in a religious sense requires action: the performance of religious ritual and the performance of everyday life in accordance with *halacha* (Jewish law)” (Bial 13). Unlike identity factors based on biology, the Wiccan identity is one claimed and performed by choice. However, in choosing to perform this religious identity, Wiccans marginalize themselves from the mainstream.

concerns in a given play. According to theatre scholar Mary Luckhurst, a production dramaturg often works primarily with a play text, but that the practice “can also refer to external elements relating to staging, the overall artistic concept behind the staging, the politics of performance... [and] the calculated manipulation of audience response” (10-11). Through the notes of the dramaturg, an audience is often directed to pay attention to aspects of the production they may otherwise never notice. The act of dramaturgy involves a detailed textual analysis but also an interpretive response that may or may not be related to the author’s original intention. While a production dramaturg works within the director’s artistic vision, Luckhurst argues that dramaturgy “encompasses the creation of a performance aesthetic” (11). In the case of this study, I apply my Wiccan dramaturgical lens as a tool of analyzing preexisting texts rather than in creating new productions. However, through this lens, an audience (whether Wiccan or not) can begin to see images significant to Wiccan identity within these fantasy texts.

It becomes necessary to define “text,” as I will be studying much more than the books through which the Oz, Narnia and Wizarding World<sup>16</sup> stories originate. Nearly every adaptation of these stories can be considered a text and can be read. As a theatre scholar, I will specifically focus on instances where aspects or characters of these texts have been staged or embodied through performance. Theatrical or film adaptations are necessarily appropriations of the source texts,<sup>17</sup> and the directors, actors, and audience interpret them in widely divergent ways from the author’s original intention. L. Frank Baum’s *Wonderful Wizard of Oz* has been staged in several adaptations, both on film and through live performance. *The Chronicles of Narnia* have often been staged, particularly in community theatre, but also through several film

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<sup>16</sup> The fictional world created by J.K. Rowling has no specific name, and thus it is difficult to reference. I chose to call it Harry Potter’s “Wizarding World” based on the theme park by that name which will be opening at Universal Studios in 2010.

<sup>17</sup> See John Rouse “Textuality and Authority in Theater and Drama: Some Contemporary Possibilities” and Julie Sanders *Adaptation and Appropriation* for more in-depth analyses of the issues of appropriation in theatrical adaptations.

versions. While Harry Potter's Wizarding World has not yet been staged in a traditional theatrical manner, the books have been embodied through film. Fans also perform elements of the stories through paratheatrical enactments, including but not limited to book parties, conferences, summer camps, classes, and online forums. Paratheatrical activities are not necessarily intended as performance but can be analyzed as performance. I will use the texts of selected films and performance adaptations and the historical context for each variation.

In this dissertation, I argue that these modern fantasy stories can be viewed as "mythology" rather than merely as "fiction." In common usage, either of these terms could indicate "false or untrue story." Some people take great offense to the use of the term "mythology" in reference to their sacred stories. To call a sacred story "untrue" seems to trivialize it. Religious studies scholar Bruce Lincoln explains that the negative connotations are mostly based on the power dynamics between different religious groups, with one group designating their own narratives as superior to those of others (24). Thus, if a person refers to another group's stories as "myths," they are effectively invalidating the beliefs of the other group. Yet, many Pagans and Wiccans have no problem with the term "mythology" and recognize the value of stories in cultures, present and past. My use of the term "myth" draws upon the work of Joseph Campbell who defines myths as "metaphorical of spiritual potentiality in the human being" (22). As an expert in comparative mythology, Campbell analyzed the myths of many cultures for their commonalities and differences. He specifies that some mythology links people to themselves and "to the natural world, of which [they] are a part" (22), while other mythology is "strictly sociological, linking [them] to a particular society" (23). Wiccan use of myth creates both links, connecting individuals to the natural world and also to their unique subculture.

Further, most Wiccans do not accept a strict dichotomy between “truth” and “fact,” so the value of mythology is based on significance, not the literal history of events. Roland Barthes, in his oft-quoted work *Mythologies*, connects the study and analysis of myth to semiotics (111). Barthes explains that most mythological stories include an unlimited number of meanings and concepts. He claims, “There is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely” (120). In its most dynamic form, “the reader lives the myth as a story at once true and unreal” (Barthes 128). This point cannot be stressed enough for its significance to Wicca. Religious studies scholars Matthew Dickerson and David O’Hara agree in their *Handbook on Myth and Fantasy*: “Indeed, any myth that has survived through centuries almost certainly contains truth... To call something ‘myth’ should not in any way diminish its importance or verity” (30). Lincoln defines myth as “that small class of stories that possess both credibility and *authority*” which he bases on “the status of *paradigmatic truth*” (24). Within the paradigm of the culture, does the story have truth? Within the Wiccan paradigm, stories that reinforce their worldview contain truth, though not necessarily facts. Well-known fantasy author J.R.R. Tolkien explains, “Something really ‘higher’ is occasionally glimpsed in mythology: Divinity” (51). Through mythological stories, many people find connection to their own understanding of greater truth.

This study is based on the premise that modern books, movies, and live performances create new myths that help define the Wiccan identity in relation to themselves, the natural world and society. Ritual studies scholar Ronald Grimes claims, “Not long ago, the terms ‘ritual’ and ‘media’ would have been regarded as labels for separate cultural domains – the one sacred, the other secular” (3). These domains are no longer considered separate. Scholars and practitioners from many disciplines have explored the intersection of mythology and popular culture. Joseph Campbell discusses the mythic nature of movies in *Power of Myth* (15-16).



Philosopher Dean Sluyter agrees, “Movies are the expression of our collective yearnings, and our yearnings are ultimately spiritual, whether we know it or not, whether we like it or not” (5). Stephen Simon, movie producer and author of *The Force is With You: Mystical Movie Messages that Inspire Our Lives*, claims “Movies are the most electrifying communications medium ever devised and the natural conduit for inspiring ourselves to look into the eternal issues of who we are and why we are here” (xxi). William Ferrell, author of *Literature and Film as Modern Mythology*, agrees that myths are “stories that attempt to provide an understanding of the real world at the time they are conceived... contemporary authors attempt to craft stories that will provide insight into how we should live” (5). In our modern times, we enter into new mythologies through the flickering of screens and the pages of books rather than through the oral stories told around flickering campfires. These stories become the new myths of our lives.

Much like the term “myth,” the term “fantasy” often connotes a lack of truth. According to Dickerson and O’Hara, “In both cases, the words *myth* (or *muthos* [the older version of *mythos*]) and *fantasy* (or *phantasia*) originally mean *accurate representations or accounts of real things*. In time, they came to mean, at least in common usage, *inaccurate, fictional, or false accounts of things*” (51, emphasis in original). As scholars, Dickerson and O’Hara have attempted to explore fantasy as valid expressions of myth, stories with significance. “The myth-maker, the teller of fairy tales, and the writer of fantasy all may speak profoundly to the human soul” (258). They emphasize a link between fantasy and the imagination which allows fantasy stories to exist. The practice of Wicca or Witchcraft depends on the imagination. Magliocco explains, “The process of becoming a Witch or a Pagan is basically the process of training the imagination... to experience religious ecstasy” (100). By opening the mind to a particular vocabulary of symbols and training the imagination, a Witch can more easily see through a magical perspective. Fantasy especially appeals to those who religious studies scholar Doug

Cowan calls “fantasy-oriented” Neo-Pagans, who find inspiration in “prominent works of fantasy” (41). As I am analyzing fantasy texts, I create my Wiccan dramaturgical lens within the context of this fantasy-oriented subgroup.

Audiences respond to fantasy in a variety of ways, on a continuum from passive viewing to active engagement and response. Many simply read fantasy books and view films and live performance strictly for entertainment. On the other end of the continuum are fantasy fans, those who engage with the stories in depth and collectively form a subculture of “fandom.” These subcultures develop between individuals with common interests in (and often devotion to) books, television shows, films, and other media. Self-defined “fans” engage with these media in highly interactive ways, ranging from internet chats to cosplay conventions and roleplaying games. One common creative medium within fandom is “fan-fiction,” where fans create new stories based in the fantasy world of their favorite stories. My study examines the intersection between fantasy and performance, and so I further ground my work in performance and cultural studies based on fandom.

Studies of fandom developed in cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s. Henry Jenkins, an influential scholar in this field, writes in *Textual Poachers*, “Making meanings involves sharing, enunciating, and debating meanings. For the fan, watching the series is the beginning, not the end, of the process of media consumption” (284). He discusses at length how fans create “folk culture” based on the “raw materials of commercial culture” (285). This folk culture includes, but is not limited to, stories, books, videos, and enactments. Jenkins claims, “Media texts, thus, can and must be remade by their viewers so that potentially significant materials can better speak to the audience’s cultural interests and more fully address their desires” (286). When a Wiccan spectator reads Witch signs in a media text, she or he recreates the text according to Wiccan cultural interests. In *Theorizing Fandom*, Cheryl Harris compares fan

practice to an expression of “otherwise silenced identities through a common interest in a symbol, icon or text” (5). By sharing these symbols in the relatively safe society of other fans, they find expression for their marginalized identities. Harris further believes fandom “provides an opportunity to live in and through a set of symbols that are expressive of one’s aspirations rather than ‘reality’” (6). In this way, fans locate themselves within the reality of the fantasy world and meet others who share similar interests.

Despite the growing field of fan studies, fandom remains on the edge of society, perpetually the “other” (Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington 3). According to Matthew Hills in *Fan Cultures*, “To claim the identity of a ‘fan’ remains, in some sense, to claim an ‘improper’ identity, a cultural identity based on one’s commitment to something as seemingly unimportant and ‘trivial’ as a film or TV series” (preface). In this way, the subculture of fandom seems analogous to the subculture of Wicca, including fears of trivialization. Hills compares fandom to “new religious movements,” as “cult fandoms may display a type of religiosity without forming ‘religions’” (118). Both have a tendency to “act as some kind of threat to the rationalized ‘modern’ self... this depiction resonates with anxieties which have found a place in media analysis... as well as in the common image of the ‘fan’ as absorbed in a fantasy world” (Hills 88). Though quite different in their expression, Wiccans and fans share similar judgment from those outside their subcultures and can have quite parallel experiences.

In *Convergence Cultures* (2006), Jenkins also approaches the intersection between fandom and religion, though his comments are directed specifically at what he calls the “Potter Wars:”

The fundamentalists claim that fantastical representations of violence or the occult shaped children’s beliefs and actions in the real world. Countering such claims, the books’ defenders were forced to argue that fantasies do not really matter, when in fact, what we have said so far suggests that the immersive quality of the books is what makes them such a powerful catalyst for creative expression” (197).

This contradiction carries over into some Wiccan reactions to fantasy witch images, for if they consider these images important and valuable in their spiritual identities, they may fear this could give some Christian fundamentalists more ammunition to argue that they are subversively trying to convert children through fantasy. Conflicts like this push some Witches and Wiccans further away from fantasy witches.

For some Witches, their religious identity begins with childhood fantasy. Magliocco claims that many adults who identify as Witches were “very imaginative children who constructed elaborate make-believe worlds for themselves based on books” (200). These “bookish children,” along with the “magical children” who have experiences with fairies, ghosts, and the like, are often rejected by more conformist children and have a tendency to construct oppositional identities as teenagers and adults. Magliocco speculates “this experience of rejection and difference is what lies at the core of Neo-Pagan identification with subdominant Others” (201). While many children read fantasy and never imagine becoming Witches themselves, some bookish and magical children empower themselves as adults by recreating “real” versions of their childhood fantasy worlds. I find it significant that the three texts I am examining are most commonly advertised as children’s stories but are often enjoyed by Wiccan adults. These stories operate on many levels, providing moments of recognition and significance for Witches in relation to their cultural identities.

### **Witchcraft and Academic Scholarship**

Before embarking on the specific signs that make up this Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I will contextualize this study with a brief survey of academic approaches to Wicca and Witchcraft, both from insider (emic) and outsider (etic) perspectives. Contemporary Witchcraft is a hot topic in performance studies. In 2007, Oxford’s *Forum for Modern Language Studies* Vol. 43 No. 4 was a special issue filled with articles on the category of “Stagecraft and Witchcraft.”

All of the essays in this volume focus on historical witchcraft, from Shakespeare to Arthur Miller, attempting to understand the subjective nature of early modern belief in irrational supernatural. As editor Amy Wygant describes, “Multi-factorial, with roots plunging deep into the mental structures of early modern people, witchcraft provides a particularly sensitive touchstone for historical understanding” (335). Lance Gharavi takes the analysis of witchcraft from a theatrical perspective into modern religious studies with his article “Hex and the City: Text for Occult Performance in Late Capitalism” in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* in September 2006, where he analyzes a modern Wiccan book from a performance perspective. The scholarly conversation about contemporary Witchcraft has produced panels at various conferences and even a few conferences specifically about Witchcraft. In May of 2006 and again in 2007, the folklore and mythology department of Harvard University sponsored a conference called “Charming and Crafty: Witchcraft in Contemporary Media.” A conference called “Pantheacon” has been presented annually in southern California for the last fifteen years. This conference brings together scholars and practitioners for presentations of papers, rituals, and more. Claremont Graduate University offers a “Current Pagan Studies Conference” every year.

Scholars from many disciplines began exploring the phenomenon of Wicca as a religious studies movement in the 1980-90s. Journalist Margot Adler first approached the history of the movement in her book *Drawing Down the Moon* (1979). As a practitioner, Adler’s book balances between personal experience and scholarship. While practitioners found much value in the history, academics were much more likely to legitimize outsider accounts. Jeffrey Russell, in his book *A History of Witchcraft: Sorcerers, Heretics & Pagans* (1980), separates representations of witchcraft into three categories: those practicing diabolical or harmful magic throughout history and various cultures of the world (which he calls sorcerers), those who were persecuted for having beliefs outside of Christianity (heretics), and modern revivalist Pagans (Neo-Pagans).

Diane Purkiss, in *The Witch in History* (1999) specifically argues against some modern Neo-Pagan fabricated histories, what I later will call “mythistory.” A similar critique is brought by Helene Foley in “A Question of Origins: Goddess Cults Greek and Modern” (2001) and Glenn Wm. Shuck’s “The Myth of the Burning Times and the Politics of Resistance in Contemporary American Wicca” (2010). These etic accounts compare historical fact to the myths and legends many practitioners hold dear, so they have been met with hostility by some practitioners. They do, however, bring up important scholarly questions about Wicca’s claims to historicity.

Etic accounts disguised as emic research have caused even more hostility among practitioners. In 1989, Tanya Luhrmann published an influential study called *Persuasions of the Witch’s Craft*. Part of what made Luhrmann’s approach unique was that she gained the confidence of many covens and Witches, working with them magically in order to observe them anthropologically. The same participant-observer technique has long been used by anthropologists cross-culturally. However, Luhrmann’s informants were educated people in Britain and thus were able to read her conclusions. She defined Witches’ belief in magic as “interpretive drift,” a scholarly way of saying “self-delusion.” Many Witches felt belittled by her analysis and betrayed after she published her findings and then abandoned the religion. As Hutton explains, many held “the enduring impression of her as an academic outsider who had been welcomed and taken into confidence, only to use those who had trusted her as a means to further her professional career, and discard and deride them when their utility ended” (Hutton, *Witches* 261). Practitioner and scholar Taylor Ellwood, in his article “Academic Cultural Appropriation of Neo-Paganism and Occultism” accuses several scholars, including Luhrmann, of “appropriating” the culture of Neo-Paganism for academic gain (187). He urges more Neo-Pagans to write scholarly work and to be careful when speaking to outsider scholars. “Just because we are written about does not mean we are appreciated or valued or that our culture is

respected" (195). While Ellwood's perspective is a bit extreme (and ironic, considering how often Neo-Pagans are accused of cultural appropriation themselves), his article points to the gap between those inside and those outside the Neo-Pagan subculture.

Helen Berger's *A Community of Witches* (1999) was one of the first scholarly attempts at analysis of Wicca from a positive perspective as a new religious movement in the United States. Like Luhrmann, Berger takes a participant-observer approach in her study of Witchcraft on the American east coast, but she has maintained a positive relationship with the Pagan and Wiccan communities she studied. She argues against some who have claimed Wicca is merely a "pseudo-religion" of postmodernity, reasoning that Wicca emerged out of late modernity rather than postmodernity because of its adherents' connection to Enlightenment thought. Berger analyzes the religious movement in some depth while providing clear examples of rituals and individual practices. Berger also worked with Evan Leach and Leigh Schaffer to undergo a "Pagan Census" of more than 2,000 people held from 1993-1995. This is the largest survey of this type that has been attempted to date and allows for analysis and conclusions to be drawn about the elusive religious movement. Their book, *Voices from the Pagan Census* (2003), presents the data without judgment. It outlines Pagan beliefs held in comparison to a larger, mainstream segment of society, as well as sociological data like marital status, economic status, political activities, etc.

In 1989, Ronald Hutton published *The Triumph of the Moon* as the first systematic scholarly study of the history of the Modern Pagan Witchcraft movement from its emergence in South Britain. Hutton later clarifies his approach was strictly historical, seeking to "write the history of modern Pagan witchcraft rather than to inform the public of what present-day witches actually did and believed and why" (Hutton, *Witches* 264). Yet, Hutton admits that his interests were not purely as an "academic outsider" but rather as an "ally" (265). *Triumph of the*

*Moon* is cited by Pagans and non-Pagans as an authority on a more accurate history of Witchcraft (as opposed to the mythistory I will discuss in the next chapter). Unlike Russell, who covers modern Witchcraft in a mere three chapters, Hutton focuses on modern Witchcraft through his entire treatise. In a later work he discusses at length the reactions his work received. Most often, in response to his research subject his academic peers “immediately blasted the whole concept of modern Paganism with mockery, the simplest and most effective discursive strategy for attempting to both damn something and to remove it from the sphere of rational debate” (277). On multiple occasions, Hutton felt the same types of discrimination as his subjects, causing a great deal of empathy. His work is respected among practitioners and scholars alike, though he focuses understandably more on history than culture.

Another participant-observer (but not practitioner), Sarah Pike, examines the subculture from the perspective of identity development through Neo-Pagan festivals in *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves* (2001). She explained her research to the festival-goers upfront but found that the participants often “forgot” her etic status. “I entered their world as a curious outsider, but as I talked to Neo-Pagans about their ritual experiences, childhood memories, and concerns for their children and the future, I found the boundary between insider and outsider slipping away...” (xv). Despite her reservations, “This slippage of identities was more a problem for me than for the Neo-Pagans I came to know, as one of my informants reminded me...” (xvi). Pike’s analysis treats the Neo-Pagans in her study with respect, and her thoughtful critiques allow for insight into the definition of modern Pagan identity.

Practitioner and scholar Jone Solomonsen wrote *Enchanted Feminism* (2002), an emic account of the San Francisco Wiccan community, as a theologian and anthropologist. She explains her intent to interpret the community “horizontally, in solidarity with their own points of view, not vertically and from externally applied norms” (17). Yet, Solomonsen recognizes the



inherent challenges of participating fully while maintaining distance. “Engagement is more than participation, and something else than pretending. To allow oneself to become engaged is to take the intent of the ritual seriously” (18). This is what many previous “participant-observers” lacked – the willingness to take Witches’ intentions seriously. In order to fully examine the cultural phenomenon of Witchcraft, a scholar must not trivialize the participants’ religious experiences.

The deepest cultural analysis of modern witchcraft to date is by practitioner Sabina Magliocco in *Witching Culture: Folklore and Neo-Paganism in America* (2004). As a practicing Gardnerian Priestess and a scholar trained in anthropology and folklore, she focuses on “the cultural productions of this subculture” including aesthetics and material culture (9). This book gives an excellent analysis of the modern Neo-Pagan movement and its implications, including a discussion of Neo-Pagan ritual as a type of theatre, citing how both require scripts, staging, set design, and elaborate prop and costume construction (148). Though Magliocco began studying Neo-Paganism as an outsider, a series of “extraordinary experiences” led her to claim the religion as her own (13). After discussing other anthropologists who took similar approaches, she asks, “Am I an insider or an outsider, and how can I be ‘objective’ about a culture if I have adopted an emic, or insider’s perspective?... one could legitimately ask whether I have adopted an insider’s bias – the uncritical, enthusiastic embrace of the religious convert” (15). However, Magliocco’s ethnography clearly separates her “field journal” notes from her folkloric and anthropological observations. She provides a critical analysis of the actual beliefs and practices from the inside.

Two other interesting emic accounts are Nikki Bado’s *Coming to the Edge of the Circle* (2005) and Chas Clifton’s *Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America* (2006). Bado uses the example of a Wiccan initiation ritual to examine initiation rituals in general,

offering scholarly insights to a practice she came to as a participant. Clifton follows the example of Hutton in tracing the historical movement through the United States. Both offer academic perspectives from insider authors. In her blog article “Why We Do Pagan Studies,” Clifton admires Bado’s technique of using a specific, insider-observation to make larger conclusions. “By using Wicca as her model instead of some other religious tradition, and by discussing her own participation, she also does indeed make a case that Pagan scholars of religion can do good work in the academy,” claims Clifton.

The most recent etic account of interest to this study, Douglas E. Cowan’s *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet* (2005), makes no claims to participant-observation. Cowan points out “that emic perspectives have just as many blind spots as etic ones, they differ only in terms of what they see and what they don’t” (xi). He does not, however, disregard emic accounts: “Even a cursory review of a few of the more detailed emic treatments of modern Pagan belief and practice... reveals clearly the depth of thought and self-reflection that exists within modern Paganism, as well as some of the internal tensions within the movement, that speak to the seriousness with which many modern Pagans regard their emerging religious tradition” (5). Cowan makes many interesting conclusions about modern Pagan identity-formation through his analysis of the Neo-Pagan Internet subculture, and he mostly treats practitioners with respect. Occasionally, though, he slips in words like “silly” (40) or “culturally fashionable joke” (195) which serve to exhibit his bias against modern Paganism.

I define one aspect of my identity as Wiccan (though no one identity subculture could define me or anyone else),<sup>18</sup> but in this dissertation, I do not seek to expound upon my own

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<sup>18</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s a person had to work very hard to find information about Wicca. Oaths of secrecy and distance kept close reigns on dissemination of information. When I came into Wicca in 1997, the internet had already made information accessible to a much broader audience. Just as feminism had multiple “waves” upon which later feminists expanded upon ideas and actions of the earlier waves, my

experiences with fantasy witch images as they relate to my Wiccan identity. While I have an emic point of view, I am quite familiar with studies analyzing Wiccan culture from both critical and affirming perspectives. I will create a Wiccan dramaturgical lens based on scholarship in order to analyze how the Wiccan spectator can reinterpret stereotypical images and claim identity through viewing and responding to performance.

### **A Wiccan Reading of Fantasy Texts**

Just as performance scholars Wolf, Román, and Sandoval, Dolan, Bial use subcultural perspectives to analyze performance and its impact on subcultural identity, my Wiccan reading of these performance texts highlights how the Wiccan spectator can claim witch/wizard images to reinforce and enhance religious identity. Since I'm asserting a Wiccan reading—a Wiccan spectatorial lens—I need to spend some time identifying the substance of the model Wiccan spectator. I use this identity position as a critical tool through which I analyze representations of fantasy witchcraft. I do not suggest that this model necessarily represents all Wiccans, for Wiccans vary greatly in their identification with and against a cultural and literary (and theatrical) legacy of witch representations. In my first chapter, I'll review the development of the historical witch sign in Britain and the United States. Then I will quickly review the development of modern Wicca and the Wiccan response to the historical witch sign. I'll end my first chapter by defining nine "identity markers" within the three broad categories of culture, beliefs, and practices. These markers are based on academic and select practitioner accounts of Wicca. The Wiccan dramaturgical lens could be used by any spectator willing to assume the Wiccan perspective for the sake of analysis.

In the subsequent three chapters I will identify and analyze the fantasy worlds of Oz, Narnia and Potter's Wizarding World through this Wiccan dramaturgical lens. While all of the

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generation of Wicca builds upon and expands ideas as inherited from the early practitioners of the 1960s and 1970s. I thus call myself "second-wave Wicca."

identity markers could be designated in each story, I will focus on one category per chapter. I analyze the well-known MGM film *The Wizard of Oz* and the Broadway musical *Wicked* through markers relating to Wiccan culture in chapter two. I examine one *Narnia* stage adaptation and one film specifically for Wiccan beliefs in chapter three. I designate identity markers related to Wiccan practices in the *Harry Potter* films and paratheatrical adaptations in chapter four.

In chapter five, I will make conclusions about this type of subcultural performance of identity and performed spectatorship. Wolf suggests that musicals lend themselves to “performed spectatorship,” indicated by singing along, tapping of toes, and the like (33). Witches’ performed spectatorship takes specific form through rituals designed in response to these fantasy images. Performance of fantasy witch images need not merely be a re-doing that copies faithfully older traditions of doing. Rather, it can be a doing that re-signifies, a tactical syncretism that alters/assimilates a new authenticity. Witches can claim religious identity through ritual dramatizations based on a Wiccan interpretation of modern fantasy-texts. These ritual performances are examples of how a subgroup can appropriate popular images for their own identity formation and also use performance as an outlet for resistance against the mainstream culture. Wiccans derive meaning specific to their identities from images that were not necessarily intended for this purpose, just as audiences actively create meaning based on their experiences, their significations, and their subcultural needs.

Wiccans weave their cultural identity through the signs they recognize in fantasy, but also through their performances of identity with one another and the rest of the world. As Henry Bial claims, “A community’s performances reflect and embody its values, beliefs, and traditions. Moreover, the concept of performativity suggests that performance can also define and shape those values and beliefs” (*Performance Studies* 263). By incorporating ritual innovation and change within established structure, fantasy-oriented Witches recognize the

need for and legitimacy of play. By actively engaging their willing suspension of disbelief, traveling to fantasy worlds available only in the imagination, they create a spiritual sort of fan-fiction. They continue the stories, sometimes altering the stories as fans do in fan-fiction, according to their subcultural needs. This type of performed spectatorship allows some Witches to find deeper symbolic significance in the stories through their immersion in modern myth. In my final analysis and conclusion, I will discuss the significance of these performed actions and suggest implications for the broader field of performance studies and for the Neo-Pagan movement.

While this study analyzes a specific subculture's use of symbolism for spiritual purposes, other subcultural performances seek to reinterpret mainstream images for their own performance of identity. For example, in their performance *Re/membering Aunt Jemima: A Menstrual Show*, Glenda Dickerson and Breena Clarke used the racial stereotypical "Mammy" image to communicate about race and gender identity. As Clarke explains, "In celebrating the character and person of Aunt Jemima we do not condone the stereotype as she has been used to oppress African-American women... we acknowledge her as the symbol and the repository of the shame, disease and hatred from which we wish to free ourselves" (Perkins and Uno 34). This symbol of denigration is claimed as a symbol of power by these African-American women. Another feminist minority performance group, Spiderwoman Theater, was well-known for including fantasy and mythology in their shows. As Lisa Mayo explains, I write to capture my fantasies and to use those fantasies as building blocks for a story that is already with me... For example, the 'Fat Goddess' needs to be heard" (Perkins and Uno 298). Again, Mayo chooses a traditionally negative image to claim her power. According to Marvin Carlson, cultural feminism flourished during the 1970s based on "a growing body of research into medieval witchcraft, prehistoric and non-Western goddesses and fertility figures, and ancient matriarchal

cultures” (149). Some of these performances paved the way for cultural acceptance of Wicca and Witchcraft (such as it is) while empowering women to perform their marginalized identities. Performance allows opportunities for minority voices to be heard and for stereotypes to be revisioned, disrupting the expectation of mainstream identity definitions.

My study is the first to bring together several different conversations: Witchcraft as a religion from a cultural and identity perspective, fantasy images of witchcraft as significant to Witches, and performance as a medium for these fantasy stories. This study opens up the conversation of the relationship of pop culture to religion, particularly in the development of modern myths. While I recognize I am biased toward a fantasy-oriented Wiccan worldview, I also believe my academic training in theatre allows me a unique perspective on the performative audience response to modern fantasy. Viewing fantasy witch images through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens allows a spectator to have a unique perspective in cultural criticism which could prove meaningful beyond Wicca into the much broader intersection of religion and performance.

## CHAPTER ONE: CONSTRUCTING THE WICCAN DRAMATURGICAL LENS<sup>19</sup>

Since I'm asserting a Wiccan reading of fantasy performance—a Wiccan dramaturgical lens—I need to spend some time identifying the substance of the Wiccan spectator. Wiccans identify with and against a cultural, literary, and theatrical legacy of witch representations. I'll first review some of the salient features of the historical witch sign in the West. Then I'll discuss how modern Witches interact with that lineage. I will end by describing nine identity markers by which I will shape the dramaturgical lens of Wicca. Though these identity markers are neither comprehensive nor totalizing, I assert that they give a reliable, accurate sense of the semiotic perspective of the Witch spectator. In choosing source material to define the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I use emic (insider) and etic (outsider) scholarly texts as well as primary sources written by Witches and Neo-Pagans (including some on-line blog posts, as these give the most current view of the Wiccan discourse). Wicca has been defined by insiders and outsiders as having no central authority or text,<sup>20</sup> so it is impossible to say that all Witches believe or practice in the same way, but I will attempt to define a consistent dramaturgical lens representative of the subculture. This chapter is intended to give a clear understanding of the significance of the identity markers that will be used in my Wiccan dramaturgical reading.

### **The Witch in Folklore: Fantasy Based on Supposed Reality**

Before expanding on the Wiccan culture, beliefs, and practices I've marked out above, I want to spend a bit of time describing the historical development of the image of witchcraft in

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<sup>19</sup> Portions of this chapter were published in my article "From Witch to Wicked: A Transformative and Mutable Sign" *Fantasy Fiction into Film: Essays* © 2007 Edited by Leslie Stratyner and James R. Keller by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640. [www.mcfarlandpub.com](http://www.mcfarlandpub.com). Used by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc. See Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> Despite having no single sacred text, Cowan calls Neo-Paganism "a remarkably textual culture. Many modern Pagans see an important connection between the collection of resources related to one's spiritual beliefs and the ritual practice of one's spirituality; indeed, many are inveterate bibliophiles" (35). Most Witches find many texts sacred rather than any single text.

folklore. A brief overview of how the “witch” image circulating in popular culture came about can help contextualize the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, but this dissertation will *not* attempt to construct a comprehensive history of witchcraft on stage.<sup>21</sup> Since I am dealing with a primarily United States-based Wicca and popular culture (with influence from Great Britain), my brief historical overview focuses on the Anglo-American tradition.<sup>22</sup>

Many forces built the image of the “witch,” an image which has changed significantly throughout its history. As early as the fourth century, witches were defined as women who practiced magic<sup>23</sup> relying on what historian Wolfgang Behringer calls “contract between a human being and a demon” (4). However, these demons or devils were associated with powerless pagan gods, and witches were pitied, not persecuted (4). With its rapid expansion in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the Christian church sought to maintain discipline and order by defining orthodoxy and punishing heresy of all forms. By the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, fears of witchcraft grew more prevalent and the reactions more violent. A defining characteristic of magic represented in this period is the necessity of a pact with the “Devil” and the *maleficia*, or harmful magic, produced. Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger reify the image of malevolent witches in their treatise *Malleus Maleficarum* (published c1486), which specifically outlined how to

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge give a good historical context for Jacobean witchcraft plays in the introduction to their *Three Jacobean Witchcraft Plays*. Edmund Ligan writes about “Contemporary Forms of Occult Theatre,” including Wiccan rituals, in his article by the same name in the *Performing Arts Journal*. Robert Lima writes a fair history of occultic representations on stage in his book *Stages of Evil: Occultism in Western Theater and Drama*, but he has been accused of inaccurate scholarship according to Ligan’s review in *The Journal of Religion and Theatre*. A comprehensive history of witchcraft and the stage has not yet been written.

<sup>22</sup> Witchcraft has a fascinating history in many cultures, including the *brujeria* in Spain and Latin America, shamans in aboriginal peoples’ traditions, African witchcraft, etc., and some Wiccan traditions incorporate aspects of these non-European images into their practice. The vast majority of Wicca, however, derives from Anglo-American sources, so the scope of my project limits my discussion to these witch images.

<sup>23</sup> Though many contemporary Witches add a “k” to the end of this term to designate a difference between religious magick and stage magic, I am following the example of scholars Magliocco, Berger, Pike and others who choose not to use this spelling in scholarly writing. The only exceptions are direct quotations.



identify, try, torture and execute those practicing harmful magic, leading to oppression and persecution that lasted centuries. Many scholars have sought to pinpoint social marginalization as the primary cause for the persecution.<sup>24</sup> Some claim that economics played a big factor, especially since a conviction of witchcraft often included a seizure of assets.<sup>25</sup> However, in the minds of many of the people who hunted witches, theirs was a noble cause, seeking to do the will of God and protect themselves and their families. According to historians Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern, the violence enacted against the witch was often vengeance for assumed covert violence on the part of the witch (168). The development of the “witch” sign directly related to fear and paranoia of difference. According to folklorist John Widdowson, witches in folklore are often pictured as “old, wrinkled, bent, crippled and reclusive...They may mutter to themselves or display other signs of abnormal or antisocial behavior” (202). This image of social alienation or marginalization became a significant part of witch sign.

Historically, while a witch could be either gender, women were generally considered more “corruptible.” Gender issues as related to the witch-craze have been explored by numerous scholars.<sup>26</sup> A large proportion of those tried and executed as witches were women. The most common source cited for the association of women with witchcraft is the *Malleus Maleficarum*. The authors’ treatment of women is especially harsh, outlining specifically why women are more susceptible to “evil superstitions” than men, more capable of “carnal

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<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Russell (72) and Diane Purkiss (71-74) discuss the social factors of the European witch-craze.

<sup>25</sup> Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark discuss the complex economic situation of the witch trials in their *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Period of the Witch Trials* (73-75) and Carol Karlsen discusses “The Economic Basis of Witchcraft” in *Witches of the Atlantic World* (337-246).

<sup>26</sup> Elaine Breslaw devotes an entire section of her *Witches of the Atlantic World* to primary sources related to gender and commentary on the issue (283-354). In *Witchcraft Myths in American Culture*, Marion Gibson discusses the social history of witches in relation to gender. Gibson includes an extensive biography of Matilda Gage, mother-in-law of L. Frank Baum the author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Gage’s research of historical witchcraft, and her subsequent argument about women’s suffrage issues (112-119). Diane Purkiss discusses how early modern women perceived witchcraft in the second half of her book *The Witch in History*.

abominations” than men, and defective in intelligence, leaving them more open to demonic influence (43-45). Women were represented as inclined to approach magic physically while men approach magic intellectually. In his essay “The Feminization of Magic and the Emerging Idea of the Female Witch in the Late Middle Ages,” Michael David Bailey argues a woman gained power through “complete and absolutely explicit submission of the witch to demons and ultimately to the devil” (127). Usually this submission is shown through an act relating to the body, like allowing a familiar to touch or suck blood from the witch’s body. During this period, men practicing harmful magic were called “wizards” or “sorcerers” and demonstrated intellectual power, learning, and skill through magical practice, while the female witch demonstrated her bodily weakness through submission.

Folklore developed about witches’ magical relationship with animals, including the possibility that witches could shape-shift into animals, that witches could communicate with animals, and that animals could give witches power as “familiars.” The presence of a witch’s “familiar” was a clear indication for many witch-hunters of a person’s guilt. Jeffrey Russell speculates that the tradition of familiars probably originated with pre-Christian nature spirits of folklore. “The Church associated these spirits with minor demons and took the association of the sorcerer with the familiar spirit as another sign of his relationship with the Devil” (52). One extensive original description of a witch’s familiars was given by “witch-finder” Matthew Hopkins in 1647. He described several animals who all attended and “sucked good blood” from the body of a convicted witch (38). Similarly, Michael Dalton, another witch-hunter, published a guide in 1618 which describes the familiar as a spirit “which appeareth to them sometimes in one shape, sometimes in another; as in the shape of a man, woman, boy, dog, cat, foal, hare, rat, toad, etc.” (366). Witches were often pictured in woodcuts with various animals. Superstitions about these animals developed out of the fears of these familiars, and “even today

no depiction of a traditional witch is complete without her black cat” claims symbolist David Pickering (55). Goats also often appear in the woodcuts as a symbol of the Devil “who is said to have a goat’s cloven hooves and is sometimes depicted with a goat’s head” (117). Associations of the goat with “Devil-worship” continue to this day, though many Witches now associate the goat image into the Deity Pan or the archetypal “Horned God.”

One major accusation levied against witches was the ability to fly, either on a broomstick or by some other means. Historian Kurt Seligmann suggests the accusers believed, “Perhaps it was a demon who carried them in such a way, or a devil in the shape of a goat or a griffin, or the enchanted stick, broom, pitchfork, or magic wand.” Seen as utterly unnatural, the ability to fly would allow a witch to create harm throughout a span of greater distance, so this was an image that brought great fear. While the witches’ confessions of flight may have been brought about through torture, some of the witches seemed convinced of their journeys. According to historian Michael Harner, the early European image of witches flying on brooms may actually have its basis in the use of a hallucinogenic “flying ointment” which made the witch think she had traveled on a broomstick. The broom itself became intimately associated with the flight as “undoubtedly more than a symbolic Freudian act, serving as an applicator for the atropine-containing plant to the sensitive vaginal membranes” (131). Whether the phallic shape was practical or symbolic, the image developed a juxtaposition of a woman using male power, the phallus, to transcend above the female, physical realm. Ritual scholar Leslie Northrup, in her book *Ritualizing Women*, claims horizontal imagery occurs more frequently in women’s spirituality as opposed to vertical, male hierarchy (30). The vertical has more to do with heavenly concerns, while the female, horizontal, bases itself on the earth and physical plane. To fly above the earth brings the female witch into male domain. It is little wonder that in traditional folklore she needed a male demon or phallic broomstick to accomplish this feat.

In early woodcut images of witches, women are pictured wearing little or no clothing during their rites. The images of nakedness associated the witch with sexuality and licentiousness. Images of witches being tried and executed showed them wearing clothing similar to other women, simple peasant dresses of neutral colors and various headgear. This reinforced the probability that nearly anyone could be a witch. The association of specific clothing signifiers, dark clothing and a conical hat with a wide brim, developed well after the actual witch craze as the images passed into folklore and fairy tales. According to folklorist John Widdowson, "The physical appearance of witch-figures is typically frightening and is often almost a caricature of all the most unpleasant human characteristics. Extreme ugliness, bodily deformity of all kinds, birthmarks, warts... They often dress in dark, dirty, ragged clothes" (202). Superstitions evolved around the color black, which has long been associated with death. Harmful magic is often called "black magic" and the Devil was referred to as the "Black Man" (Pickering 34). By picturing women wearing dark clothing and associating with dark beings, these early witch images reinforced an association with evil and destruction.

The witch's hat is a more complicated symbol without a clear, definable lineage. Conical hats are often pictured on fairy-tale princesses, so it is no great leap to imagine that the hat with a brim would be cast aside as unfashionable but would be considered practical by women who work outside in the sun (a common supposition). Images of sorcerers were pictured wearing pointed hats, associated both with connection to the heavens and connection to the Devil's horns. Any animal with horns could be considered a manifestation of the Devil. A more spiritual meaning of the conical shape according to Jung is androgyny, as "a dual symbol: from one point of view it is penetrating in shape, and therefore active and masculine in significance; and from the other, it is shaped like a receptacle which is feminine in meaning," claims symbologist J.E. Cirlot (151). Thus, the hat could represent a cross between masculine and

feminine, much like the broom. The conical hat, based more on imagination than on “real” witches, quickly became a key identifier of the “witch” sign in folklore.

Once identified, witches were persecuted in a variety of ways, but the most significant for the purposes of this project was the “swimming test,” a trial by which a woman would be bound hand and foot and thrown into the water. “Those who stay afloat are considered to be witches and are burned; those who, on the contrary, go under are declared innocent of all witchcraft and are set free again” (Behringer 56). Of course, many of those proven “innocent” by their failure to float drowned. The choice of water as method may have been related to folkloric beliefs that a witch could not be baptized by water due to her demonic associations. Thus, refusal of baptism was clear cause for an accusation of witchcraft (204). Water itself is usually seen as a symbol of life and birth, though full immersion in water “signifies a return to the preformal state, with a sense of death and annihilation on the one hand, but of rebirth and regeneration on the other” (Cirlot 365). These connotations of life and death, good and evil are intimately connected to the chain of signifiers leading to the fantasy witch.

The persecution of witches during the English Renaissance was encouraged by stage plays based on a combination of fantasy and current witch images. *Friar Bacon* (c1590), by Robert Greene, certainly shows dangers involved in sorcery, and *Dr. Faustus* (1594), by Christopher Marlowe, shows an even more extreme punishment. The first staged female witch character of this period is Erichtho in Marston’s *Sophonisba* (1604-6), a character who is capable of controlling storms and reanimating the dead (Corbin & Sedge 6). The witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* (1605-6) also cause harm through their supernatural powers. Ben Jonson’s anti-masque to his *Masque of Queenes* (1608-9) continued the popularity of witches on stage, while Shakespeare dramatized the sorcerer Prospero in *The Tempest* (1611). In Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* (1612), the lead character Hecate brags about her familiar and pact with

the devil. However, these witches are completely outside of local communities, more fantasy than local danger. The final witch plays of this period, *The Witch of Edmonton* (1621) and *The Late Lancashire Witches* (1634) were timely, based on contemporary witch trials. The latter was even produced before the final verdict of the trial had been announced. The stage presentations transitioned from showing Friar Bacon and Dr. Faustus, images of male sorcerers known primarily from legends, to contemporary female witches who were accused, tried, convicted and executed.

Prosecutions for witchcraft declined dramatically in the 18<sup>th</sup> century due to the rise in “a rational, scientific, and secular world view that denied the reality of witchcraft and the possibility of demonic intervention in the physical world,” according to historian Brian Levack (34). The Age of Enlightenment brought with it a general disbelief in such superstitions as witches, but the images continued in folklore and on stage. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the image of the sorcerer and the witch remained fastened in the public imagination through two dynamic forms of “entertainment,” stage illusionism and spiritualism. Illusionists were primarily men who readily admitted they used “tricks” to create their magic, though some cultivated connections to earlier sorcerers and conjurers to incite the imagination of their audiences. Like male sorcerers of old, they claimed their powers through cunning and mental agility. Spiritualists were primarily female mediums who manifested a variety of phenomena as communication from “spirits,” claiming their power through the spirits’ use of their bodies as “channels,” much like the classic witch. A great tension developed between the illusionists and the spiritualists, as the magicians sought to prove the mediums were using tricks similar to their own while most mediums claimed their spirit manifestations were genuine. Historian Janet Oppenheim suggests that earlier witch images “imply a deeper knowledge of nature, a certain affiliation with forces, both natural and supernatural, far beyond any prowess ever attributed to a

nineteenth century conjuror" (24). Stage magicians of the nineteenth century failed to fill this role, so mediums "were in a sense the modern successors to those aspects of the wizard's craft that had fallen by the wayside of the rationalist, technological progress" (24). Both allowed their audiences to believe in the extraordinary.

The witch images of old were reinterpreted in fiction and art at this time. In 1863, Jules Michelet published *La Sorcière*, a sympathetic portrayal of witches in the Middle Ages, claiming that the witch hunts were intended to rid Europe of ancient pagan religions. According to Hutton and Magliocco, Michelet popularized the image of a young and alluring enchantress in place of the ugly, misshapen hag. This prepared the way for positive interpretations of the folkloric "witch" image by modern Witches. Several books claiming to be scholarly accounts attempted a reinterpretation of the witches of pre-Christian Europe. The most significant of these were James Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890), Margaret Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921), and Robert Graves' *White Goddess* (1948), though the scholarly veracity of these works has reasonably been questioned. All three have since been proven to contain more fiction than history, but they were incredibly influential in the development of modern Witchcraft.

In the early twentieth century, practicing witchcraft was still considered illegal in many European countries, including England. The final Witchcraft Act was repealed in 1951, making it legal to practice Witchcraft publicly. Very shortly after this repeal, a man named Gerald Gardner published a book called *Witchcraft Today* (1954) describing a new way of thinking about Witchcraft as a religion. This new version of Witchcraft involves no pact with the devil or conjuring of demons, though many of the associations of the folkloric witch sign remained.

The new religion was called “Wicca,”<sup>27</sup> though many, including Gardner, prefer the generic term “Witchcraft” or simply the “Craft.” While some (including Gardner) claim that modern Witchcraft has an unbroken lineage of religious traditions dating back to ancient worship of a mother Goddess and her consort, most scholars (and many practitioners) sincerely doubt this.<sup>28</sup> So, if Wicca is not an “ancient” religion, what is it? And how does it relate to the folkloric witch?

### **The Definition and Mythistory of Modern Witchcraft**

While aspects of modern Witchcraft hearken back to early images of witches, the sign continues to shift in content and meaning. In preparing for an analysis with the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, it is important to remember that the Wiccan spectator lives with and against the semiotic lineage I have just outlined. By linking their current religion to the folkloric witch sign, modern Witches must either claim or deny images of old women wearing conical hats and flying on brooms (or, worse, casting spells on innocent people, sacrificing babies, and worshipping the devil). Wiccans choose to identify their religion with a name given to the antagonist in dozens of fairy tales, disempowered women and men who were persecuted through the Renaissance, and used as a derogatory insult to this day. Why would a Wiccan choose to identify with a word loaded with so much historical and cultural baggage? Magliocco explains, “By choosing to identify as such, Neo-Pagans and revival Witches are knowingly and consciously constructing themselves as the opposite of right society – part of the dark, the irrational, the primitive, and the possibly dangerous” (202). The attraction to witch images is related to an attraction to the negative connotations of the image, though the stated intention of most contemporary Witches is to “harm none.” Witches have always been identified as

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<sup>27</sup> The word witch derived from *wicce*, a female magician, and *wicca* originally was the masculine form of this noun. Both words stem from the Germanic verb *wiccian*, “to practice witchcraft.” (Harper “Witch”). Many modern Witches define the term as meaning “to bend or shape,” an idea first popularized in Robert Graves’ *White Goddess*, though there is no etymological proof for this definition.

<sup>28</sup> See Hutton’s *Triumph of the Moon* for the most complete history of the modern Witchcraft movement.



marginalized and on the edge of society. Pike claims, "It is on the boundaries... between Neopaganism and Christianity, between sacred and profane spaces, and between self and other that Neopagans create new religious identities" (xi). There is power in opposition and marginality. Most Witches thrive in the boundaries and create their identities based on their opposition to mainstream culture.

Witches are defined by their belief in and practice of "magic," even though most non-Witches tend to view the concept of magic with great skepticism, imagining fantasy worlds filled with fire-breathing dragons and spectacular spells. The concept of magic defines the genre of fantasy, according to Dickerson and O'Hara, as "a standard feature of fantasy literature, both modern and ancient" (231). The English word "magic" relates to two older words, the older *goetia* which related to the invocation of evil spirits, and *magia*, a magic that produces changes in the world for good or ill (231n). "Magic in fantasy literature has been used to produce art, to aid creativity, to enchant and delight, to heal the sick, and even to enhance and uphold physical structures like castles and walls and entire kingdoms. It has also been used to deceive and manipulate, to enslave, to wound, and to kill" (232). Within fantasy, magic is presented as an unexplained force deriving from either inherent sources (from within the witch or wizard) or external sources (through invocation, whether of Deity, demonic energy, or forces of nature). Much of the fear of Witchcraft stems from confusion between *goetia* and *magia*, from questions of the source of Witches' supposed power, and from whether or not this type of magic "works."

According to Hutton, one of the most common queries he receives about his research into modern Witchcraft is "not of a sociological or theological nature, but whether its spells really worked" (Hutton, *Witches* 276). The efficacy of magic, however, cannot be determined by scientific or sociological means. The briefest definition of the modern Witches' concept of magic

could be “intentional change.” The vast majority of modern Witches do not practice negative magic (*goetia*), summon demons, or attempt to harm others. Recognizing that change is an inherent part of this reality, Witches attempt to control some changes for their own purposes or for their perception of the greater good. They claim full agency for these changes, and while they may invoke various deities and powers of nature (like the four elements), most traditions of Witchcraft teach that magic begins within the Witch. Unlike the folkloric images, the source of a Witch’s power derives not from Satan or any external Deity, but from within. Part of the magical worldview is a belief in interconnections between all things. Magliocco describes magic as “a set of principles, underlying the universe, by which all beings and phenomena are interconnected” (102). Just as one’s physical actions have impact on both self and others, the symbolic actions in magical work have impact on self and others. Only the Witch can tell whether or not the magic has worked.

The dichotomy of magic vs. religion is well-documented in academic studies, though in Neo-Paganism the two are intricately linked. According to Cowan, “For more than a century, since the rise of the academic study of religion late in the nineteenth century, scholars have struggled to define ‘magic,’ usually with the intent to differentiate it from a ‘religion’ – a pursuit that seems less and less realistic in the context of modern Paganism.” (75). Belief in magic is inherent within the Neo-Pagan religion(s). However, most Witches’ understanding of the relationship between magic and natural laws differs from mainstream misperceptions. Folkloric images of witches portray magic as some sort of “supernatural” phenomena, allowing witches to fly on broomsticks or turn people into toads. A religious Witch is more likely to attempt working with the natural properties of objects and events than against them.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Magliocco gives a concise listing of the “Laws of Magic” (based on teachings of Holly Tannen and Don Frew, adapted from Isaac Bonewitz) that clearly explains how Wiccan magic works with the natural world (103).

According to practitioner Scott Cunningham, “Magic isn’t a means of forcing nature to do your will. This is a completely erroneous idea, fostered by the belief that magic is somehow supernatural, as if anything that exists can be outside of nature” (6). This requires a shift in understanding what encompasses “nature.” For a Witch, everything is connected, and therefore everything is part of nature. If there are simple and mundane ways of affecting change in the world, then magic is most effective when worked in conjunction with those simpler methods. A person is more likely to win the lottery if they buy a lottery ticket, for example, but a magical working may enhance the possibility of winning. Solar, lunar, and life cycles continue without a Witch’s magical working, but by doing the magic she or he is more able to attune with those naturally occurring phenomena.

It is the responsibility of the Witch to choose what imagery speaks most to his or her intention. Most Wiccan magic is fundamentally based on the use of images, colors, objects, and imitative actions as symbols. Magliocco explains, “All objects and events are suffused with meaning, which can be discerned by observing the symbolic correspondences between them” (102). While hundreds of “spell books” list magical formula and correspondences, most Witches agree that magical workings designed by the individual are likely to have greater effect. Yet, by allowing individuals to interpret and reinterpret these symbols freely, Wiccan practices have drawn much criticism. As Cowan relates, “It is the open and relatively unrestricted creativity so highly valued by modern Pagans that allows for such a *laissez-faire* construction of both social and religious reality” (4). While most Pagans and Wiccans find this flexibility of boundaries and definitions an asset, the emphasis on personal agency sets these newer traditions apart from more authoritarian or traditional religious practices and may make it seem less legitimate to some outside the religion. Within Wicca, whether the Witch’s magic is focused on internal consciousness or whether it includes an external component, all magical

change begins from within. Ultimate power and authority reside within the self. Cowan calls this “personal gnosis,” “the intuitive, intentional construction of one’s own religious beliefs” (28). While this allows a great deal of flexibility in belief and practice for participants, the priority of personal gnosis makes criticism or even codification quite difficult. Cowan agrees ultimately that this is “the *problem* of personal gnosis by which modern Paganism is both blessed and cursed” (28). The greatest authority resides within the individual and his or her interpretation of the world, but those who act in community interact with each other, changing signs and interpretations according to the needs of the group.

Most Wiccans draw from a variety of sources in developing their personal gnosis. Cowan compares modern Pagans to “open source” computer programmers who freely modify and share software, “‘hacking’ their own religious traditions out of the ‘source codes’ provided by pantheons, faith practices, liturgies, rituals, and divinatory processes drawn from a variety of cultures worldwide” (30). Nearly all sources are considered valid, though the individual must find the best combination for their own personal gnosis. Some have criticized Neo-Paganism for “cultural appropriation,”<sup>30</sup> though Cowan claims that Neo-Paganism should not be considered a “so-called ‘cafeteria religion,’ in which components of different traditions are gathered into an eclectic whole based on the individual tastes of the participants... the selection and modification of religious components in the open source model occurs at a deeper level” (31). Most Neo-Pagans exhibit a firm commitment to their personal spiritual sources. Some spend significant time researching historical and cultural context, but even the most eclectic practitioners have specifically chosen the symbols and images used in their practice because of their perceived efficacy. Modern Witches use “what works” regardless of the source.

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<sup>30</sup> Helene Foley’s “A Question of Origins: Goddess Cults Greek and Modern” (2001) clarifies this criticism, but the tendency toward appropriation has also been reflexively examined by many Pagan scholars. An interesting collection of articles on this subject are in *Talking About the Elephant: An Anthology of Neopagan Perspectives on Cultural Appropriation* (2008) edited by Lupa.

Yet, the primacy of personal gnosis brings up many tensions within the subculture of Neo-Paganism. For the purpose of this study, the most important tension is between what Cowan calls “the research-oriented and the fantasy-oriented” subgroups (40). Research-oriented Neo-Pagans focus on historicity and tradition. Many believe they are reconstructing pre-Christian Pagan practices, while others recognize the forms of their practice to be new but seek authenticity through their use of “ancient” mythology. Some research-oriented Neo-Pagans selectively choose which “facts” of history to include in their personal practices, putting on pretenses of history without doing the actual research to back it up. Cowan argues that this causes negative reactions, as “simply ignoring the facts of history and ‘making it up as one goes along’ often hinders their ability to be taken seriously in late modern society” (50). The research-oriented subgroup inherently conflicts with the fantasy-oriented Neo-Pagan subgroup, who find inspiration in “prominent works of fantasy” (41). Cowan cites groups such as the Church of All Worlds, which formed in response to the fiction book *Stranger in a Strange Land* by Robert Heinlein. While those in the fantasy-oriented subculture may still incorporate research and scholarship or work with “ancient” myths and traditional practices, they tend to find more significance in recent works of fantasy than the research-oriented Neo-Pagans. They are also usually more open about the recent nature of the stories which inspire them. Research-oriented Neo-Pagans argue that fantasy images trivialize their “serious” religious pursuits, but fantasy-oriented Neo-Pagans are more likely to recognize and respond to fantasy as modern mythology.

Some Witches insist on the literal truth of Witchcraft having an ancient lineage of Goddess worship, and many also claim that current Witchcraft is directly related to the religion practiced by women and men who were persecuted in the sixteenth and seventeenth century witch trials (often “The Burning Times”). Authors of introductory books and websites often

describe this a-historical lineage as literal truth.<sup>31</sup> Some cling to the concept of “ancient authenticity.” A common misperception is that the age of a faith makes it authentic. This is not necessarily the case in a post-modern society with a more flexible understanding of history and authenticity. Today, many Witches acknowledge what Helen Berger calls the “self-conscious creation of this myth” (125). She claims, “The mythical link to lay healers, magicians, and those executed in the witch trials provides a basis for the creation of community” (125). Magliocco agrees, “Today most well-read Pagans and Witches realize the symbolic nature of their origin stories, and no longer accept them as fact. Yet these stories continue to have a powerful effect on individuals, even when they understand their metaphorical nature” (193). Many Witches allow for these stories to be relatively recent creations, newly revealed sacred texts, for their validity does not depend on their historical accuracy. As Hutton explains, scholars and practitioners agree that the best way to approach these stories is as “myth and metaphor,” which somewhat eases the tension between Witches and historians (Hutton, *Witches* 265).

Witches practice what historian Joseph Mali calls “mythistory,” an alternative to the traditional dichotomy between myth and fact. The purpose of mythistory is to “reappraise these stories as inevitable, and ultimately valuable, histories of personal and communal identity” (Mali xii). Most Wiccans recognize a lack of historicity in the religion’s origin stories, but this does not diminish the stories’ metaphorical impact in creating the Wiccan identity. Wicca balances between the present and the past, existing fully in the postmodern world but metaphorically connecting to an idealized pre-Christian world. In many ways, this view of history relates to the Wiccan view of mythology: a story need not be “factual” to have

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<sup>31</sup> Starhawk gives a short narrative history of Witchcraft, claiming it began “more than 35,000 years ago” (17) and including that “somehow, in secret, in silence, over glowing coals, behind closed shutters, encoded as fairytales and folksongs, or hidden in subconscious memories, the seed was passed on” (21). Scott Cunningham recognizes the “current controversy as to the ‘antiquity’ of Wicca,” yet claims modern Witchcraft descended from ancient shamanism. Both of these are considered highly influential authors of introductory books about Wicca and Witchcraft.

significance or to relate spiritual truth. This becomes especially important when analyzing Wiccan responses to fantasy, because from this perspective, a story need not be “real” to be “true.” The practice of mythistory also reveals how Wiccans are already adept at reinterpreting signs and symbols contrary to mainstream meanings. This makes the Wiccan subculture ideal as a source for creating a new subcultural dramaturgical lens through which a spectator can view fantasy witches in performance.

I have given the history of the witch sign and defined the modern Witch in practice as a foundation for creating the Wiccan dramaturgical lens. Since I am asserting an identity-based reading, one which goes beyond my own personal lens, I must define exactly what this identity lens consists of. Within the three categories of Wiccan culture, beliefs, and practices, I will now identify nine identity markers through which I will make my dramaturgical analysis. Identity markers, which are established sociological tools, allow me to suggest a specific representative Wiccan spectatorial perspective without assuming it represents all Wiccan perspectives. Identity markers are characteristics which allow definition of a subgroup, and though performance critics do not always use the term “identity markers,” similar tools have been used in dramaturgical analysis. Bial refers to “codes” in his description of reading performance from a Jewish perspective. “The Jewish reader may decode Jewishness through aural, visual, or emotional/genre signs... Only Jews (or those who know the codes) will interpret these elements of performance as Jewish” (152). Román and Sandoval referred to “markers of Latinidad” in *Kiss of the Spiderwoman*, including “musical styles, dance patterns, regional fashions, tropical locales, and even cultural artifacts” (559-560). While they do not intend to define *all* of Latinidad with these markers, Román and Sandoval use them as signs of recognition for those viewing the musical through the lens of Latinidad. Performance scholars Elsa Herrera, Gareth A. Jones & Sarah Thomas de Benítez use identity markers as “distinctions of race, nation or

religion” in their analysis of subcultural identity in “Bodies on the Line: Identity Markers Among Mexican Street Youth” (2). In this dissertation, I use nine specific identity markers to identify images significant to Wiccan culture, beliefs, and practices in mainstream fantasy texts.

### **Wiccan Culture: Purposeful Marginalization in *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked***

As a distinct subculture, Witches interact with (and resist) mainstream society. By identifying with the name and iconic imagery of the folkloric “witch,” modern Witches associate themselves with both positive and negative connotations of these images. They create their own unique Wiccan culture which includes three specific identity markers: the name and image of the folkloric witch, a tendency toward secrecy, and a willingness to question the boundaries between good and evil.

The first identity marker of Wiccan culture encompasses the entire history and lineage of the folkloric “witch” sign in folklore as described earlier in this chapter. While all three of the texts I am studying include “witch” characters in “magical” worlds, I will especially focus on the name and folkloric image as an identity marker in my analysis of *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked*. In the original novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, L. Frank Baum significantly altered the sign of the “witch” from previous folklore by balancing the hateful “wicked” witches of the East and West with the helpful “good” witches of the North and South. The character of the Wicked Witch of the West developed solidly out of folklore and became the most recognizable iconic witch image. This image formed a foundation for all other witch images that came after it and is thus a good place for my study to begin. This image bridges modern Witches to the marginalized, persecuted witches of folklore and history. A spectator viewing *The Wizard of Oz* through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens necessarily privileges images relating to folkloric witches.

The second identity marker of Wiccan culture is a tendency towards secrecy. Public demonstration of Wiccan or Neo-Pagan identity varies widely between participants. Attending



a ritual does not make a person Neo-Pagan any more than attending a church makes one a Christian or attending a synagogue makes one a Jew. Cowan explains, "Indeed, no matter how heartily one participates, simply going to a modern Pagan ritual – whether public or private – does not make one a modern Pagan if one does not identify as such internally" (156).<sup>32</sup> Most people begin to acquire a Neo-Pagan identity with anonymous inquiry, interested but not yet committed. After an internal identification, they may or may not display their beliefs outwardly. "External conformation of behavior – whether that manifest itself in ritual activity, manner of dress, or lifestyle – follows the internal conformation of worldview" (158). Because of the historical connotations and fear of persecution, a large number of Wiccans and Witches keep their spiritual practices and their public identities separate.

Witches do not usually proselytize or attempt to convert others. One text, commonly called "The Laws of the Craft," emphasizes secrecy as a link to the pre-Christian mythistory. Wiccan practitioner Lady Sheba calls this text "the remnant of the ancient Religion as we have it today, fiercely guarded by Witches who saved it during the period of persecution" (Wickerbell 90). The Laws include prohibitions against telling anyone outside of Wicca about the identities of others involved, to the point where a person should be able to withstand torture rather than give away others' secrets (95). While very few Witches strictly uphold these Laws today, most Witches still revere the Laws in essence. New members in Wiccan covens or groups often have to agree to keep their Wiccan affiliations secret. Most groups clearly state that one member should not disclose any other members' identities. Many use separate names within the Neo-Pagan community, commonly called "Craft names" which function as "security measures to protect modern Pagan practitioners from the real world consequences of inadvertent 'outing'"

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<sup>32</sup> Cowan draws a diagram of the continuum of identification, both on-line and off. For the purposes of this study, I am most interested in the off-line model: Inquirer>Dedicant> Initiate>Authority>Innovator (159).

(Cowan 154). While some traditions are less secretive,<sup>33</sup> and, in fact, some individuals present identities that are entirely public, most groups insist on some level of discretion. Some Witches fear persecution, including having their children taken away in custody battles, loss of jobs, and other forms of discrimination. Others fear ridicule or merely do not wish to have to explain their beliefs. Witches tend to develop different ways of speaking about their religion, almost as if speaking in code, depending on whether they are speaking to insiders, sympathetic outsiders, or potentially hostile outsiders.<sup>34</sup> This secrecy creates a clearly defined community of Witches.

I recognize secrecy as a theme in each of the fantasy texts I will analyze. In Narnia, Professor Kirke encourages the children not to tell anyone of their adventures. In Potter's *Wizarding World*, the "International Statute of Secrecy" keeps witches and wizards from revealing themselves to Muggles (non-magical folk). Yet, my primary analysis of this identity marker will be in my Oz chapter. In all of the Oz stories, the "wicked" witches are punished with destruction of their bodies, much like the persecution of the Renaissance witch trials destroyed witches' bodies. Despite societal changes that foster acceptance, many Witches fear ridicule and persecution because their beliefs and practices vary from the mainstream. Rather than physical persecution, Witches today fear economic or social pressures. When viewing the musical *Wicked* through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the "wicked witch" Elphaba's persecution and secret escape can be viewed as a marker of this aspect of Wiccan identity.

The third identity marker of Wiccan culture relates to complicated questioning and ultimate flexibility of boundaries between good and evil. Wiccan ethics rely on conscious consideration of each individual circumstance. "Pagans consider magic to be a real and

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<sup>33</sup> See Magliocco's description of Starhawk's "Reclaiming" tradition for an example of a non-secretive tradition (*Witching Culture* 82).

<sup>34</sup> As I have been working on this dissertation, I realized that the same codes apply when someone asks me what I am writing about. I only mention Wicca to those I sense will be sympathetic, at least on an academic level.

powerful force in the world, but they agree that it is morally neutral. Like electricity, it can be used either to great benefit or great detriment, to improve lives or to harm others” (Magliocco 113). The morality of magic is based on the morality of the practitioner. Witches have developed several codes of ethics, though their interpretation varies widely.<sup>35</sup> The most common ethical guideline, called the Wiccan Rede, states “An it harm none, do what you will.”<sup>36</sup> The Rede has been interpreted in drastically different ways by practitioners and non-practitioners. Many Wiccan practitioners would argue that taking responsibility for one’s own actions brings with it a higher level of consequences than any outside authority could impose. Rabinovitch and Macdonald describe the Rede as “fundamentally social; it describes how people need to live in order to have a harmonious society – a workable balance between individual freedom and responsibility to others” (8). The prohibition against harm is nearly impossible, as even breathing requires us to harm microscopic creatures. But the Rede is generally interpreted to cause as little harm as possible. Second, there is a difference between “will” and “want.” Working according to will is a much more intentional choice than just following momentary whims. Practitioners Shelley Rabinovitch and Meredith MacDonald explain, “The Wiccan Rede is not something that can be passively obeyed – one must actively negotiate in order to live responsibly” (8). Living and acting according to the Rede requires a Witch to act on their belief in the interconnected nature of all things which makes magic possible. If one recognizes the interconnections between all things, one is more conscious of preventing possible harm.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See practitioner Ed Fitch’s “The Witches Rede of Chivalry” (2-3) and “The Laws” as presented by Lady Sheba (Wickerbell 91-117) for two examples of such codes of ethics.

<sup>36</sup> Though most credit Gardner with first publishing the Rede (Magliocco 113), some claim his student Doreen Valiente likely had more influence over its development (Rabinovitch and MacDonald 8).

<sup>37</sup> For a deeper discussion of Neo-Pagan ethics, see Robin Wood’s *When, Why, If* (1996), Brendan Myers’ *The Other Side of Virtue* (2008), Emma Orr’s *Living with Honour: A Pagan Ethics* (2008), or Rabinovitch and MacDonald’s *An Ye Harm None* (2004).

A Witch claims full responsibility for determining his or her own boundaries between good and evil, right and wrong. These boundaries are often complicated and may shift according to circumstance, but this requires a Witch to maintain heightened awareness about the possible ramifications of all actions. Witches constantly engage in moral questioning. Each of the stories in my study complicates the nature of good and evil (even while a selfless, “good” protagonist triumphs over a selfish “evil” antagonist in the primary plot). However, the reader (or audience) is encouraged to engage in these moral questions along with the characters. The shifting boundaries allow for another type of purposeful marginalization, setting Witches apart from those who might feel uncomfortable with this level of personal responsibility. I will focus on my analysis of this identity marker in *The Wizard of Oz* and the musical adaptation *Wicked*. The different adaptations of this story effectively question the definitions of good and evil, progressively complicating the boundaries. When viewing this text through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the moral questions especially engage the Wiccan spectator.

For many Witches, the film *The Wizard of Oz* exposed them to the idea of “good” witches and helped create their first Witch myth through its iconic imagery. The musical *Wicked* reinforced many of the iconic images but also celebrated the main character (the “Wicked” Witch!) despite her marginalization. By distinguishing the identity markers of the folkloric witch image, secrecy, and moral questioning within *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* through the dramaturgical lens of Wiccan culture, I will demonstrate how the Wiccan spectator can use these images of purposeful marginalization in performance to claim identity, transforming the “witch” signs in this modern myth.

### **Wiccan Beliefs: Earth-centered Revelation of the Sacred in *Narnia***

My second category of identity markers all describe Wiccan beliefs, which I identify as an earth-centered revelation of the sacred. I focus on this category in my analysis of

performances based on *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The term “earth-centered” simply means the focus of the religion is what happens on this earth. Rather than focusing on the afterlife, Witches focus on the here and now, including the earth and its natural cycles as a source of inspiration, wonder, and connection to the divine. Many Witches reject a separation between body and spirit, life and afterlife. As Pike explains, “These members believe that institutionalized, European-based religions, especially Christianity, depict the body and sexuality as sinful, perpetuate homophobia and misogyny, and cause ecological damage because of their emphasis on the afterlife and spirit rather than body and natural world” (xiii). For the purpose of creating the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, three of the most significant Wiccan beliefs include: inspiration from a variety of mythological sources, a view of Deity as immanent with a duality of male/female, and the sanctity of nature in time and space. While all of these markers could be identified in all three of my fantasy texts, my study will focus on identifying them in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the Wiccan spectator resonates with images of earth-centered revelation of the sacred in *Narnia*.

Many Wiccans believe in continuous revelation through a variety of mythological sources, the first identity marker in my category of Wiccan beliefs. No single canonical text describes Wiccan belief or practice. While some specific “traditions” are taught from one generation of Wicca to the next, others are considered eclectic (Magliocco 75). In an eclectic tradition, a broad variety of sources may be used as inspiration, and in a more “traditional” group, the teachings are also likely derived from multiple sources. Most Witches revere myths and stories from many religions and cultures. L. Frank Baum, C.S. Lewis, and J.K. Rowling all used a variety of sources in creating their fantasy worlds, and this mythological eclecticism is significant when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens. Thus, the first identity marker I will analyze in performances of *Narnia* is this variety of sources. By honoring mythology from

many cultures, Witches interpret and reinterpret a variety of sacred texts, recreating the very definition of mythology and allowing for modern stories to become new myths.

Unlike some popular misconceptions, most Witches do believe in “God.” The Wiccan view of Deity forms the second identity marker of the category of beliefs in the Wiccan dramaturgical lens. While the Wiccan Deities (often referred to by the generic titles Lord and Lady) are transcendent beings, they are also considered to be immanent within each person. This is often expressed with the words “Thou art God” or “Thou art Goddess.”<sup>38</sup> The most commonly used Wiccan text, the “Charge of the Goddess,” states, “And to you who seeks to know me, know that your seeking and yearning will not avail you unless you know the Mystery: for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself, you will never find it without” (Starhawk 91). Pagan practitioners Joyce and River Higginbotham use the term “permeating” Deity, “not removed from creation... [but] wholly present with creation” (*Paganism* 82). Witches find Deity within all of nature, immanent and present in time and space. As Cunningham describes, “The Goddess and the God are both within ourselves and manifest in all nature. This is the universality: there is nothing that isn’t of the Gods” (4). While individual Pagans and Witches hold a wide spectrum of beliefs about Deity, many balance the paradox between immanence and transcendence through a theology called “pantheism” which recognizes divinity within all that exists. Innate divinity can be recognized by the Wiccan spectator in all three stories. In the *Harry Potter* stories, Harry learns to rely on his own “innate divinity” or personal power under the guidance of the mythic shadows of his parents.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This phrase was first made popular through *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961) by Robert Heinlein. This novel had significant impact on the development of some Wiccan ideas, including the development of the aforementioned Church of All Worlds. This is yet another example of how a popular fiction had influence over the developing religious tradition.

<sup>39</sup> My favorite scene of empowerment in the *Harry Potter* books or films is at the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban* when Harry thinks he has seen his father conjuring a patronus. Rather, due to time travel he saw himself, and Dumbledore remarks that his father appeared “within” him.

The message of innate divinity can be seen even more clearly in *The Wizard of Oz*. The lesson learned by Dorothy at the end of the film clearly illustrates the inner power that can transform one's life. This innate divinity takes the stage in the musical *Wicked* through Elphaba's showstopper "Defying Gravity," where she sings, "And nobody in all of Oz/ No Wizard that there is or was/ Is ever gonna bring me down!" As a full folkloric image of a witch, Elphaba claims her innate power. Yet, I will primarily analyze innate divinity through the character of Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. While on the surface the Narnian stories reinforce the images of a transcendent God through Aslan and his father, the Emperor over the Sea, I will show how the Wiccan spectator views images of immanent divinity in many characters through closer examination of the performed text (especially the musical *Narnia!*). These empowering images encourage the Wiccan spectator to claim this aspect of Wiccan identity.

The Wiccan view of divinity includes a reverence for the duality of male and female genders as seen in nature.<sup>40</sup> As Raymond Buckland, one of the earliest American Wiccan teachers, explains, "Everywhere in nature there is male and female, and *both* are necessary (I have yet to meet anyone who does not have both a mother and a father). It follows, then, that both the God and the Goddess are important and should be equally revered" (14). Wicca focuses on the balance between the two, often calling them "Lord and Lady" rather than by individual names. Cunningham explains, "Every Deity that has received worship upon this planet exists within the archetypal God and Goddess. The complex pantheons of deities which arose in many parts of the world are simply *aspects* of the two" (9). This explains how eclectic Wiccan groups feel comfortable working with different pantheons and sources of mythology, as all individual stories are seen as part of the dual God and Goddess.

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<sup>40</sup> There are many newer and updated texts where Wiccan practitioners recognize that transgendered persons and "third" gendered persons as well as the relationship between homosexual partners are equally valid aspects of nature. See Starhawk's notes in her expanded edition (217-218). However, Wicca as it was presented by Gardner and is often practiced tends to be fairly heteronormative.

Symbolically, the Wiccan Goddess is most often associated with the moon or the earth. “The Charge of the Goddess” describes her as “the mother of all things...the beauty of the green earth... [and] the white moon among the stars” (Starhawk 90-91). Wiccans often compare the Goddess to the earth herself who gives and sustains all life, and just as often describe her with celestial imagery, particularly the moon. The Goddess is often depicted as a trinity of female archetypes: Maiden, Mother, and Crone. Some have criticized this view of a Goddess for essentializing women,<sup>41</sup> but these three life stages are recognizable to a large number of women and reinforce the lunar imagery as the Maiden corresponds to the waxing moon, the Mother to the full moon, and the Crone to the waning moon. Sabina Magliocco, in her study *Neo-Pagan Sacred Art and Altars*, specifically discusses how Neo-Pagan Goddess images include a variety of female forms “reflecting a broad range of qualities and attributes... icons in which women can see their own individual qualities reflected” (66). Women come in all shapes and sizes, and so do Goddess images. Magliocco describes Pagan representations of the Goddess as “fleshy, abundant, exuberant, pregnant, morphing into plants and animals; they violate neat and ordered categories of human and animal, cultural and natural” (66-67). I will show through my analysis that the White Witch of Narnia symbolically recalls connections to the earth (albeit blighted), the moon, and animals. She violates natural order and causes significant damage, but as an image of a “dark Goddess” she can be is a fascinating (if complicated) symbol when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

The Wiccan God mirrors the Goddess through solar symbolism and the archetypes of Warrior, Father, and Sage. The Wiccan God is sometimes depicted as a man with stag horns (called the Horned God) or a personified vegetation God (most often called the Green Man).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See Foley’s “A Question of Origins: Goddess Cults Greek and Modern” for example.

<sup>42</sup> William Anderson’s *Green Man* and John Matthews’ *The Green Man: Spirit of Nature* give much more information about the history and art associated with these two god images.



“These horned or leafy figures are intended to act as bridges between humans and nature, emphasizing the presence of the sacred in the natural, the corporeal, and the interconnectedness of the universe” (Magliocco SA 67). Both of these images reinforce the God as the sacrificial harvest, for the Horned one is the hunted (and sometimes the hunter) while the Green Man grows, flourishes, and dies with the vegetation in the seasonal cycles. These images mostly relate to sacrifice, which is a strong theme in *Narnia* through the character of Aslan. I will discuss Aslan as a solar God image when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

All three of the fantasy texts I analyze include strong male and female characters which could be viewed as Deity images when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens. L. Frank Baum was seen as ahead of his time for his liberating view of women, while J.K. Rowling has received much criticism for the reverse. In all of his Oz books, Baum shows women to generally be more effective than men in leadership roles. Baum represents Dorothy and the good witches as helpful and powerful, while male characters are either nonhuman or “misfits of society,” perhaps because, according to Oz historian Michael Riley, Baum “did not have much faith or confidence in the aggressive American male who was bringing ‘civilization’ to this new country” (154). Literary scholar Elizabeth Heilman criticizes Rowling’s portrayal of women in “Blue Wizards and Pink Witches,” where she claims, “Males are represented more often, but they are also depicted as wiser, braver, more powerful, and more fun than females” (223). C.S. Lewis has also been criticized strongly for his representation of women,<sup>43</sup> but *Narnia* relies on a balance between male and female images. As the second identity marker in the category of Wiccan beliefs, I will explore the challenges and possibilities in identifying several characters in *The Chronicles of Narnia* as Deity images when analyzed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

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<sup>43</sup> See McSporrán’s “Daughters of Lillith” and Kath Filmer’s *The Fiction of C.S. Lewis* for examples of gender analysis and criticism.

The final identity marker I will analyze relating to Wiccan beliefs is the sanctity of nature. Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism teach the infinite intertwining of the spiritual and material. The term “earth-centered” indicates a focus on the natural world as having spiritual significance. Witches give higher authority to their experience of the seasons and the elements than to any books or written texts. Though many Witches live in cities, vastly disconnected from the agricultural and pastoral roots of some of their practices, honoring the seasonal cycles allows them “to reinfuse their worlds, urban as they may be, with sacredness and meaning through the magical division of time and space” (Magliocco 05). Wicca divides time through the “Wheel of the Year” and space through the casting of the quartered circle.

Wicca divides time primarily into eight “Sabbats” or holy days evenly spaced throughout the year. The Wheel of the Year begins in the winter, awaiting the promise of new life in the spring. Rebirth in the spring leads to fullness in summer, harvest in autumn, and darkness in winter. Witches recognize symbolic significance between these seasonal changes and the changes in their lives, from childhood to maturity and then to old age and death. “For Pagans and Witches, yearly and monthly cycles are sacred, symbolic keys to understanding many of life’s processes as well as the relationship between life and death” (Magliocco 105). Recognizing the seasons as sacred allows Witches to recognize their own lives as sacred. Berger agrees, “In each of these celebrations a parallel is drawn between changes in the natural world and those in each participant’s personal life” (29). Thus, seasonal rituals help participants to recognize and connect to changes in the natural world. The seasons may pass without this ritual recognition, but by honoring the seasons ritually the Witch connects his or her consciousness to the seasonal changes. The metaphor has three layers: the seasonal changes themselves, the myths of the goddesses and gods associated with the seasons, and the lives of the practitioners. Witches have chosen, adapted, and written both ancient and contemporary

myths for use in seasonal celebrations. Most of these myths relate to themes of sacrifice and resurrection. “The spirit manifests in matter... But the most abundant summer is followed by winter, as the longest day ends in night. Only when one gives way to the other can life go on” (44). Sacrifice and death are always followed by birth and growth. The individual is a unique part of the greater whole, a greater cycle. The Witch’s experience of the Wheel of the Year becomes the sacred text from which all inspiration flows.

All three fantasy worlds of my study include rich descriptions of fantastical natural environments. The importance of the cycle of the seasons as the Wheel of the Year and the mythic sacrifice and resurrection can be seen most clearly in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, as I will discuss in depth in that chapter. The *Harry Potter* books also show a yearly seasonal cycle, with important events happening at specific times. Harry’s parents die on Halloween, a holiday known as Samhain in the Wiccan Wheel of the Year. Many important plot developments occur at Christmas, just after the Winter Solstice which Wiccans call Yule. Harry’s final battle and defeat of Voldemort occur at the beginning of May, near the holiday Wiccans call Beltane. According to John Granger, Harry figuratively dies and resurrects in each of the *Harry Potter* novels (15-23). While Harry’s “hero’s journey” has been interpreted by some as analogous to Christ,<sup>44</sup> from a Wiccan perspective this annual death and resurrection more closely mirrors the agricultural cycle of death and rebirth that happens every year. *The Wizard of Oz* does not incorporate seasonal changes, but *Wicked* the musical shows a similar death and resurrection, as Elphaba literally “melts” into the floor and arises from the trap door. These images can be interpreted by the Wiccan spectator as symbolic of the seasonal cycle.

Wiccans designate sacred space through the ritual practice of casting the circle, honoring the cardinal directions (east, south, west and north) and the four elements (earth, fire, water and

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<sup>44</sup> See Granger’s *The Deathly Hallows Lectures* for a Christian perspective of these images.

air). "Just as time is rendered sacred by its association with sacred narratives, so is space" (Magliocco 107). The very act of honoring the directions encourages the Witch to recognize the place where she or he is at that very moment. When concentrating on the elements of earth, fire, water, and air, a practitioner is encouraged to recognize these elements within themselves. Yet the elements are also recognized outside the body. Witches recognize the ground upon which they stand, the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the warmth of the sun as all being necessary to sustain life, and for a Witch this physical realm is the basis for spiritual connection. The four elements are well-known in mainstream culture but as symbols they are fundamental to a Witch as a source of sacred revelation.

Using the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I identify the quartered circle, cardinal directions of north, east, south, and west, and the elements of earth, fire, water and air in all three texts. Both *The Wizard of Oz* and *Wicked* have four strong female characters to represent Baum's original four witches and recall the four directions. In the film, the four witches are the Wicked Witches of the East and West, Glinda of the North, and Dorothy in the role of the absent witch of the south. In the musical, Elphaba, Nessarose, Galinda, and Madame Morrible take these roles. In *Harry Potter*, the four houses of Gryffindor (fire), Slytherin (water), Hufflepuff (earth) and Ravenclaw (air) represent the elements. However, I will primarily analyze the images of the elements as part of the "sanctity of nature" identity marker in my *Narnia* chapter, discussing how the four kings and queens relate to the elements and four directions. While none of the characters in any of these stories "cast a circle" or "invoke the elements" in a Wiccan sense, a spectator using the Wiccan dramaturgical lens can easily identify these images.

The final manifestation of the sanctity of nature I will discuss is the relationship between Witches and animals. Harkening back to the witches' familiars of old, most Witches value the importance of animals physically and symbolically. Some have "familiars" with whom they

communicate and work magic. Others prefer to work symbolically with animals, choosing a “spirit” or “totem” animal<sup>45</sup> or honoring an animal sacred to a specific Deity. Witches tend to believe in a symbiotic relationship between animals and humans and act accordingly. The relationship between Witches and animals can be identified in all three fantasy texts. In *Harry Potter*, the connection to animals is mostly metaphorical, with animal mascots representing the houses and the animal spirits called “patronuses” representing individuals. Some witches and wizards called “animagus” can physically transform into animals in these stories. In the film *The Wizard of Oz*, though Dorothy’s dog Toto could be seen as a type of familiar and the Cowardly Lion is the prime example of a sentient, talking Animal. In *Wicked* (both the novel and the musical), Elphaba’s relationship to the talking Animals drives the story as a major plot point. The anthropomorphic animals in these stories connect strongly with the human characters. *The Chronicles of Narnia* has the strongest imagery of sentient animals, with its talking animals and Aslan the lion as a divine animal image. In my analysis of Narnia, I will show how these images of the sanctity of nature combine with continuous revelation and Deity images to show how the Wiccan spectator can view *The Chronicles of Narnia* as part of an earth-centered identity.

### **Wiccan Practices: Ritual Performance in the Wizarding World of *Harry Potter***

The final category in my Wiccan dramaturgical lens consists of identity markers relating to Wiccan practices. Witches “perform” their identity by what they wear (magical clothing, a type of costume), what items they use and honor as sacred (ritual tools, a type of prop) and what they do (creating sacred space through rituals, a type of performance). Though these “witchy” performance elements may seem superficial, they are directly related to the

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<sup>45</sup> Modern Pagan academics, like Lupa in her article “Animal Totems For Everyone!” in *Talking About the Elephant*, recognize the problematic nature of cultural appropriation in using the indigenous term “totem” in a very different way than Native American cultures use the term. She argues the experience of practitioners outweighs the cultural bias of the term.

symbolism inherent in the practice of witchcraft. Witches sometimes reject the word “performance,” as they fear the term denigrates their spiritual authenticity. They connect the term performance to “pretend” or “make-believe.” In describing rituals as performance, I draw on a long line of performance scholars such as Victor Turner and Richard Schechner who directly relate religious rituals to theatre and other types of performance, claiming both “occur within special times/places” and “operate according to rules, traditions, strategies” (Schechner *Performance* 103). Witches use theatrical techniques to create sacred space and time for ritual and magical practices. Schechner strictly defines performance as action before an audience, even if the audience is part of the performing group “or, as in some rituals, the implied audience is God, or some transcendent Other(s)” (30n). The Priestess and/or Priest leading a Wiccan ritual must keep the audience in mind. The Wiccan circle is specifically kept small, circular, and interactive, with multiple methods of sensory engagement. Each person participates in some way. The quality of performance can greatly enhance the ritual’s effectiveness. Magliocco points out similarities between ritual and theatre, including “the need for scripts, staging, set design, and elaborate prop and costume construction,” but she deepens the correlation by exploring “the importance of individual creativity” (148). Witches create themselves through their performance, and their performance of rituals becomes performance of identity.

The first identity marker in the category of Wiccan practices is the intentional use of “magical” clothing or costumes. Many people who practice Witchcraft are attracted to the paraphernalia of the fantasy witch image: the pointed hat, the broom, the cauldron, the cape or cloak, and even the magic wand. Ritual clothing and magical tools may seem like nothing more than theatrical costumes and props, but for a Witch, wearing a costume can function as a psychological key for the practitioner and also enhance the theatricality of the ritual. Magliocco

explains, “The physical acts of putting on costumes and taking up props are also important cues for some Pagans... through them, participants can literally take on new identities” (*Witching Culture* 173). In “real” life, a Witch cannot easily be distinguished from a non-Witch by clothing. In general, Witches look like everyone else. While Witches may be teachers or bankers or social workers in the mundane world, when they don ritual garb, they become Priestesses and Priests.

Just as costumes for a theatrical production never appear on stage by accident, a Wiccan chooses clothing very specifically for the psychological and spiritual messages that clothing gives to the self and others. Ritual clothing for Wiccans takes many forms based on tradition. Gardner taught that ritual should be done naked, commonly called “skyclad,” and some Witches continue this practice. Some groups wear specific ritual robes, while others are more eclectic in their choices:

Medieval and pre-Raphaelite looks predominate, with a dose of Viking and Hollywood Egyptian elements... Long hair is common for both men and women, and many Pagan men favor beards; everyone wears lots of black, a color traditionally associated with witches in European folklore. Both women and men wear necklaces and pendants in multiples; body paint and tattoos are not uncommon. The overall general effect is one of loose, gentle roguishness. (Magliocco 54)

The Medieval and pre-Raphaelite clothing suggests a world of fantasy, a world filled with Lords and Ladies (which also reflects the titles given to Wiccan Deity). All colors have specific correspondences, depending on the tradition, so colors may be chosen for specific magical workings. Black is considered a “universal” color used to repel negativity in many magical systems. Necklaces, pendants, body paint, and tattoos all allow individuals to choose and display personal symbols.

At large Neo-Pagan festivals or gatherings, the variety of costuming provides much of the festival environment and allows Witches to perform their religious identity. According to

Magliocco, "The development of special ritual clothing parallels the expansion of Paganism beyond Gardnerian Craft and the growth of a public festival culture where aspects of Pagan identity and affiliation can be performed" (56). For the practitioners, costumes "mark the boundary between the everyday world and the heightened reality of the festival environment" (36). Many Witches have entire closets full of clothes they would never wear in their "mundane" lives. These may include specific ritual robes, but they also may include more fantastic costume elements like fairy wings, wearable horns (for men and women), and even the stereotypical pointed witch hats. Sarah Pike, in her study of Neo-Pagan festivals, explains that "Neopagans create images of festivals as magical worlds out of the mythological stories, fantasy, and science fiction that many of them have loved since childhood" (231n). Witches choose how to enact their "magical" selves through costuming.

As with all of my other identity markers, these final identity markers can be found in all three source stories. I discuss significance of costumes and props in my analysis of *Wicked's* classic "witch" image and in my analysis of *Narnia's* Deity images, but as the use of costumes is a Wiccan practice, I will focus more strongly on a Wiccan view of costumes in my analysis of various paratheatrical enactments of *Harry Potter*. In the *Harry Potter* books and adaptations, specific clothing designates a separation between the Wizarding World and the muggle world. Clothing signifiers emphasize differences within the Wizarding World as well, such as student robes as uniforms and scarves to associate students with specific "houses." The witches and wizards take inspiration from many times and places in choosing their dress. This allows for a vast mixture of dress similar to that described by Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, as the wizards ineffectively dress like Muggles at the Quidditch World Cup.<sup>46</sup> As the first

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<sup>46</sup> When I first read Rowling's description of the campground, I laughed out loud in recognition. She describes one of the wizards as pairing a poncho and a kilt, a pairing I've seen in person more than once at Neo-Pagan festivals. To me and several other Wiccan readers, this description felt like an "in joke."



identity marker in the category of Wiccan practices, I will identify the use “magical clothing” in *Harry Potter* paratheatricals through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

The second identity marker of Wiccan practice is the use of “ritual tools.” Witches use ritual tools for the directing of energy in ritual and magic. The four primary Wiccan ritual tools correspond to the four elements: the pentacle or disc (earth), the athame or ritual blade (fire or air depending on tradition), the cup (water) and the wand (air or fire), though Witches often do use brooms, cauldrons, books, and other tools. Most ritual tools have been associated with witches and wizards in fantasy, though often they are used in different ways from their actual uses in Witchcraft. Brooms and cauldrons are the most common tools associated with fantasy witches, and wands are commonly associated with wizards, while these are rarely the most significant or often-used tools of the Witch. Cunningham agrees, “Some of the tools of the Witch (the broom, cauldron, and magic wand) have gained firm places in contemporary folklore and myth... Most folks, however, don’t know the powerful magic behind such tools and their inner symbolism within Wicca” (25). So, while these ritual tools are associated in popular culture with witchcraft and wizardry, they have a different level of significance when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

The witches of Oz and Narnia use a variety of magical tools, but I will focus my analysis of this identity marker on the magical tools in *Harry Potter*. The tool used most often in Potter’s Wizarding World is the wand, used for spellcasting of all forms. In Wicca, the wand is a stick or rod that usually runs the length of the user’s forearm, tip of middle finger to inside of elbow. Primarily the wand is used in the direction of magical intent, to attract and banish mental and intellectual energy. A wand can also be used for casting of the circle, for spell work, or for healing. Cunningham claims, “Any stick you use will be infused with energy and power. Find one that feels comfortable, and it’ll do just fine” (28). Magic derives from the Witch, not from

the wand itself. I will discuss the wands in *Harry Potter* in comparison with actual Witches' wands. Some other tools familiar to Wiccans appear throughout the stories, though often in drastically different contexts than Wiccan use. In my analysis, I will explain how a spectator privileges the use of magical tools in *Harry Potter* theatricalizations through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

The final identity marker relating to Wiccan practices is the action of creating sacred space. Performance of ritual through a creation of sacred space relates back to all of the other identity markers. Specific ritual patterns, or repeated behaviors, through repetition of action and imagery allow participants to reach a state of liminality. As Turner explains, "Rituals *separated* specified members of a group from everyday life, *placed them in a limbo* that was not any place they were in before and not yet any place they would be in, then *returned* them, changed in some way, to mundane life" (*Anthropology* 25). The symbols are like a bridge between the conscious and unconscious, allowing for participants to find a "threshold" which is not entirely in this world. Though the word "liminal" never appears in any of the texts I am studying, each story involves children from "our" world who journey to magical worlds of otherness. As discussed earlier, many Wiccans choose Witchcraft as a religion because of magical (marginalizing) experiences as children. These characters, though not all called witches in the stories, are set apart based on their experiences, and a Wiccan spectator resonates with their magical journeys. *Harry Potter's* Wizarding World exists betwixt-and-between spaces in the muggle world. Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, a spectator can identify these liminal journeys as a metaphor for Wiccan ritual structure through the creation of sacred space.

### **Performing Fantasy in Witches' Rituals**

For this dissertation, I have specifically chosen to analyze Wiccan symbolism in *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *The Harry Potter* books because of their cultural

impact on both mainstream and Wiccan views of witchcraft. I create my Wiccan dramaturgical lens based on identity markers in the broad categories of Wiccan culture, beliefs, and practices. These stories are clearly fantasy, but on a symbolic level a Wiccan spectator can reinterpret them as modern myths. Rather than trivializing or minimizing the significance or authenticity of Wicca as a “serious” religion, claiming fantasy witch images allows Witches to exist betwixt-and-between powerful folklore and popular modern myths.

**CHAPTER TWO:  
FROM WITCH TO WICCA -  
WICCAN CULTURE IN THE LAND OF OZ<sup>47</sup>**

On the surface, *The Wizard of Oz* seems a simple fantasy. Thanks to the annual television showings and now DVD sales, the 1939 MGM movie is quite well-known in popular culture. *The Wizard of Oz* has been claimed by many marginalized identity groups, and it has been interpreted through the lens of politics, economics, race, sexual orientation, disability, and religion.<sup>48</sup> In this coming-of-age story, the character Dorothy appeals to many because she longs to escape her circumstances. In reference Dorothy's most well-known song, author and cultural analyst Salman Rushdie asserts, "'Over the Rainbow' is, or ought to be, the anthem of all the world's migrants, all those who go in search of the place where 'the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.' It is a celebration of Escape... a hymn – *the* hymn – to Elsewhere" (23). The rest of the story consists of travelers longing for home, a brain, a heart, and courage. These disempowered seekers claim power over their oppressors, ultimately finding what they seek within themselves. Anyone that has ever felt "different" or marginalized in mainstream society could find significance in *The Wizard of Oz* and its subsequent adaptations. However, I argue that many religious Witches relate their sociological struggle directly to the marginalization of witch characters in the film and in the musical *Wicked*. The Oz story offers Witches a rich source of imagery when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

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<sup>47</sup> Portions of this chapter were published originally in the article "From Witch to Wicked: A Transformative and Mutable Sign" *Fantasy Fiction into Film: Essays* © 2007 Edited by Leslie Stratyner and James R. Keller by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640. www.mcfarlandpub.com. Used by permission of McFarland & Company, Inc. See Appendix C. Other parts of this chapter were published originally in the article "The Wonderful Witches of Oz" in the journal *The Baum Bugle*. Used by permission of *The Baum Bugle*. See Appendix D.

<sup>48</sup> Henry M. Littlefield opened the field of interpretation with his populist treatise *The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism* which was published in a widely known scholarly journal in 1964. Since then the story has been interpreted widely and has come to represent many things to many different people. The marginalization theme might be why *The Wizard of Oz*, Judy Garland, and the character of Dorothy became popular gay icons.

Many people view the Oz story as secular, having little or no religious significance. Some scholars have already identified this American folk tale as modern myth, though rarely is the myth associated with a specific religious tradition. For example, literary critic Paul Nathanson specifies the film to be a “secular myth” for American society. Even Rushdie, in his analysis of the movie, claims, “There’s not a trace of religion in Oz itself; bad witches are feared, good ones liked, but none are sanctified; and while the Wizard of Oz is thought to be something very close to all-powerful, nobody thinks to worship him” (12). The vast majority of viewers see no connection between *The Wizard of Oz* and real Witchcraft. Many Wiccans dismiss *The Wizard of Oz* as sheer fantasy or find its witch images stereotypical or offensive. After all, the prime antagonist is a witch, and the dichotomy between “good” witches and “bad” witches exhibits a moral polarity that makes many Witches uncomfortable. However, I argue that Oz imagery resonates with three major features – identity markers – that characterize the culture of Witches: 1) the claiming of the name and image of “witch;” 2) the tendency toward secrecy that creates a separate segment of society; and 3) the flexibility of boundaries between good and evil. In the manner of Stacy Wolf’s lesbian counter-readings, I will first highlight a Wiccan counter-reading of the witch images in the 1939 film. Then I will analyze the current Broadway musical *Wicked*, which in many ways realizes aspects of my Wiccan counter-reading. I contend that a Wiccan perspective can shed new light on the shifting sign of “Wicked Witch” as it relates to Wiccan culture.

### **What Do Witches Look Like? – Witchcraft and the 1939 Film**

In order to understand the significance of the film to Wiccan culture, we must first contextualize it and give credit to the author of the original book. When L. Frank Baum created his fantasy land in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900), he created a dichotomy of female rulers, including two “good” witches. Up to this point in fairy tales, the term “witch” usually applied

to negative figures, and positive role models were usually called fairies, godmothers, or sorceresses. By popularizing “good” witches, Baum paved the way for religious Witches to define themselves as “good.” Literary scholar Marion Gibson calls Baum’s work a “new synthesis,” the first in American stories to include more “good” witch characters than bad (139). Baum’s work was based specifically on theosophy, a doctrine of religious philosophy that contributed to the development of Wicca.<sup>49</sup> Baum biographer Katherine Rogers claims he was inspired by his theosophist Mother-in-law Matilda Gage to create his good witch characters. “He agreed with her,” argues Rogers, “that magic was simply a form of knowledge and that witches (and sorcerers) were people with extraordinary knowledge, who could use it for good or ill, depending on their character” (79). This concept of magic as a form of knowledge that can be used for various purposes fits with the Wiccan view of magic. Individuals with power have choices about how to use that power. Baum understood a “vision of a cosmos in which physical and spiritual reality were part of one great whole, filled with beings seen and unseen and governed by those same laws” (Rogers 51). His theosophical beliefs allowed for magic as a supernatural possibility that still followed the laws of the natural world, much like the Wiccan belief in magic as a natural force. This allowed him to create a story that changed the way the world views witches (and, much later, Witches).

Though the novel was quite popular, the story is now best known through the 1939 screen version of *The Wizard of Oz*. This film reifies stereotypical witch images as antagonists. MGM scriptwriters Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf made several choices that influenced the roles of the witches in the film. First, they chose to frame Dorothy’s experience in Oz with a longer sequence in Kansas, including Miss Gulch, a spinster who wants

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<sup>49</sup> See Sarah Pike (xiv) for more about the connection between Wicca and theosophy. See H.P. Blavatsky’s *The Key to Theosophy* (originally published in 1893) for a more comprehensive introduction to theosophical philosophy.

to take away Dorothy's dog, Toto. Once she makes the journey, she finds very different witches from the ones in the book. Rather than four witches, two good and two wicked based in the four cardinal directions, the movie only characterizes three because "Langley amalgamated the Good Witch of the North and Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, into one character" and "began what seemed the necessary dramatic process of turning the Wicked Witch of the West into Dorothy's sole adversary" claims Oz historian Aljean Harmetz (38). In the book, Dorothy faces many dangers and finds multiple allies, but in the movie she has one magical foe and one magical ally.

The imagery associated with each witch's physical appearance signifies her nature as much as or more than names or actions. Dorothy (and the audience) first encounters Glinda, the Good Witch, played by Billie Burke, as she descends majestically from a glimmering bubble. Producers eliminated the "old" Witch of the North from the novel, defining "goodness" with youth and beauty (though Burke was actually 55 years old at the time of filming). When asked if she is "a good witch or a bad witch," Dorothy announces, "I'm not a witch at all - witches are old and ugly... I've never heard of a beautiful witch before!" (Langley et al 54). Glinda assures her that witches can be beautiful, as she is one. This character personifies the stereotype of femininity: pink and glittery with a crown of stars and magic wand. Burke speaks with a soft, girlish voice and sings in a high soprano, but her body posture commands authority. She walks lightly, almost gliding, giving an impression of supernatural control. Burke holds her wand vertically, as a staff, and her crown emphasizes the vertical image as well. She is portrayed as a type of Queen, though she defines herself as a "witch." Her "good" actions include giving Dorothy the ruby slippers, a mixed blessing. While the ruby slippers ultimately allow her to return home, Dorothy's possession of the slippers causes the Wicked Witch of the West to pursue her. Glinda sends Dorothy to the Emerald City to meet the Wizard, though the Wizard

himself holds no answers for Dorothy. She sends snow to save Dorothy and her friends from the poppies, but only after the Tin Man and Scarecrow specifically cry for help. In the end, she gives Dorothy guidance to understanding that she had the power within her all along.

For the Wicked Witch in the film, producer Mervyn LeRoy originally wanted to create a glamorous witch akin to the Queen in Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*, but he eventually bowed to the pressure asking for a "wicked, hateful witch" (Harmetz 123). Margaret Hamilton, a well-known character actress, had no fears of playing an "ugly" character. In interviews she often jokes about her appearance: "When I was six years old, I played Sleeping Beauty... That was my first acting appearance and the last time, if I may say, that I played a beauty of any kind" (Harmetz 123). While Hamilton is always described as a gentle woman with much grace, many people judged her on the basis of appearance alone. The Wicked Witch certainly represents marginalization, and Margaret Hamilton experienced this through the entire filming process. "I always thought they got me mixed up with the actual Witch" she says in an interview (Harmetz 179). In the studio, Hamilton played her scenes alone or with Garland or the winged monkeys and describes herself as having "the sense of being on a ship and separated from the mainstream of life" (Hamilton xix). She saw many inequities between the way producers treated her and Burke, the Good Witch (Harmetz 127). From this perspective, Hamilton's line as the Wicked Witch, "It's so kind of you to visit me in my loneliness" (Langley et al 107), takes on another level of meaning. Hamilton was segregated because of her role as Wicked Witch, treated as a person of lesser importance. The anti-witch bias extended beyond the screen and into her very real experience. Wiccans feel a similar segregation and often experience a similar anti-witch bias. I observe many Witches feel a kinship to the Wicked Witch, despite her "evil" exterior. This backstage information about Hamilton's marginalized experience reinforces my Wiccan reading of her on-screen character.



The Wicked Witch of the West appears with thunder, fire, and smoke emerging from the ground. With inhuman green skin, a dark and shapeless dress and conical witch hat, the Wicked Witch terrorizes Dorothy, her friends, and even her dog throughout the movie. While Burke walks with elegant posture, Hamilton hunches her back and holds her hands in claw-like positions near her heart, almost as if she is trying to protect her heart from being seen. While Burke's melodious voice can be likened to music, Hamilton uses a scratchy, nasal voice, drawing out her words like fingernails on a chalkboard. As musical scholar Michelle Boyd points out, the fact that Glinda sings while the Wicked Witch does not is significant in the genre of fantasy musicals. "When drama unfolds in a setting in which characters communicate through song as well as speech, evil witches and other villains are often marked by their inability or unwillingness to sing... Consequently, the Wicked Witch's inability to sing underscores her fundamental opposition to the Oz community" (106) While Burke gives Glinda a soft, tinkling laugh, Hamilton creates a loud cackle, a laugh now synonymous with wicked witches. The character's leitmotif, a frenetic, high-pitched minor-key violin, alerts the audience to the presence of danger when she first appears as Miss Gulch and later as the Wicked Witch. Paul Nathanson compares the imagery of the two witches to the sacred images of angels and demons. "The Good Witch takes off and lands gently in a silvery bubble accompanied by the tinkle of a glockenspiel," he describes, "the Wicked Witch takes off and lands violently in a ball of flame and smoke accompanied by claps of thunder" (226). Glinda, as an angelic figure, is associated with "light," the sky, and clouds, while the Wicked Witch is associated with demonic flames, smoke, wind, and storms.

The Wicked Witch's green skin stands out as her most memorable aspect and became a significant part of the folkloric witch image thereafter. According to my research, the image of a green-skinned witch first appeared in this film in 1939, though no official MGM sources choose

to take credit for the invention. Most likely, credit should be given to Jack Dawn, the makeup designer for the film. Green makeup in 1939 was highly toxic, being made of copper, and makeup artist Jack Young said, “Every night when I was taking off the Witch’s makeup, I would make sure that her face was thoroughly clean. Spotlessly clean. Because you don’t take chances with green” (Harmetz 272). Parts of the makeup seeped into the skin, however, and her skin actually took on a green tinge, according to Oz historians Jay Scarfone and William Stillman (44). She also sustained serious injury when the makeup caught fire during a mistake in special effects (Harmetz 272). Yet, the green skin became an integral part of the “wicked witch” sign, and since 1939 images of green witches pervade American society through their common use. But why green? Could this color have some sort of historical precedent or significant connotation for Witches?

In early folklore the color green is associated with demons and devils. In medieval morality plays, green was a sign of the devil, and generations of theatre practitioners considered it unlucky to wear green on stage (Pickering 121). As most Witches dislike being associated with “demonic” imagery, this association makes the image even less appealing. Goblins, aliens and other nonhumans are also often pictured green with lizard-like features, and this reinforces the Witches’ marginalization (feeling alien or different from others). Some Witches associate green skin with positive images, including Earth Goddesses.<sup>50</sup> These images empower Witches. And, though the green-skinned witch was not known until *The Wizard of Oz*, a historical link can be made between this image and pre-Christian witchcraft through the accounts of “flying ointment,” the hallucinogenic ointment used by witches to visualize flying. Michael Harner quotes some direct accounts of those tried and convicted of witchcraft in 1681

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<sup>50</sup> Recall the description of symbolism associated with the Wiccan Goddess I related in Chapter One. “The Charge of the Goddess,” describes her as “the beauty of the green earth” (Starhawk 90). The image of a wild Green Woman parallels Green Man images in art. The idea of a “Green Goddess” has inspired several books and films, a popular salad dressing, and even a mixed drink.

who describe the ointment as “greenish in color” (130). An account by the physician of Pope Julius III in 1545, in describing the assets of a couple seized for witchcraft, claims “Among other things found in the hermitage of the said witches was a jar half-filled with a certain green unguent” (135). These ointments were made of green herbs, and if the witches applied them all over their bodies they themselves would take on a greenish hue. This historical precedent allows the modern green witch image to connect to the Wiccan origin myth of connection to pre-Christian witches. This information makes the image ripe for Witches to claim.

When the film was released, the Wicked Witch made immediate impact on the audience. In conjunction with the political climate in 1939, the Wicked Witch is often compared to Hitler (Harmetz 261-2). At this time in history, clear delineations between “us” and “them” seemed essential to survival. The Wicked Witch has also been interpreted as representing nature, sexuality, or untamed power, but she is most associated as a symbol of fear itself. The image of the Wicked Witch in this film was so frightening to children that many of her scenes were deleted. “Margaret Hamilton suffered the most in editing,” Oz historian John Fricke explains on the DVD commentary. “A dozen or more of her lines scattered throughout the picture disappeared after the first sneak previews. She was just too terrifying for children.” Ultimately, the Wicked Witch is only on screen for twelve minutes. Hamilton argues, “She’s constantly there because she’s constantly a threat all the time. So that you’re much more aware of her than I think anybody realizes” (Harmetz 296). For having such minimal exposure, Hamilton’s Wicked Witch of the West influenced folk imagery of witches from this point on. Indeed, the Wicked Witch of the West quickly becomes the stuff of children’s nightmares, while the Good Witch, who appears on screen for less than seven minutes, is likened to a Fairy Godmother.

A third witch, the Wicked Witch of the East, is barely present in the film. The only distinct image of the Wicked Witch of the East is of her legs, wearing horizontal striped

stockings, and her ruby slippers. Some fans claim that Hamilton represents the Wicked Witch of the East when riding a broom in the cyclone because her shoes slightly glimmer and Dorothy refers to the witch in her song before she meets the Wicked Witch of the West. The images of horizontal striped stockings and the broomstick both reinforce the horizontal (female) imagery as wicked. This witch is primarily characterized based on her reputation, which can be seen by the actions of others. The Munchkins celebrate the “joyous news” that she is “morally, ethically, spiritually, physically, positively, absolutely, undeniably and reliably dead” (Langley et al 57). They sing and dance and laugh at her demise, even while condemning her to hell in their song with the words “She’s gone where the goblins go... Below, below, below” (58).<sup>51</sup> Whatever she did to terrorize the Munchkins, their celebration over her death seems rather heartless,<sup>52</sup> especially when the Wicked Witch of the West arrives looking for her sister’s killer. In the context of the movie, the song “Ding, Dong, the Witch Is Dead” portrays a happy celebration and later became a cultural catchphrase. When viewing through the Wiccan lens, I view this scene differently than most non-Witches do, for I humanize the witch characters and find the jubilation over death truly disturbing. The image of the Wicked Witch of the East thus connects to the Wiccan fear of being misunderstood and ridiculed based on otherness.

While the scriptwriters purposefully excluded the Good Witch of the South from the screenplay, the cardinal directions of East, North, and West suggest the need for a fourth (especially when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens which privileges images of the four cardinal directions), so audiences subconsciously may try to fill her absence and identify a

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<sup>51</sup> The reference of “goblins” explicitly compares this witch to green creatures, though the Wicked Witch of the east is never shown as having visible green skin in the film.

<sup>52</sup> Out of the extensive commentary I’ve researched related to this movie, the juxtaposition of the Munchkins celebrating over someone’s death is only called into question by Javier Farias in *Spiritual Symbolism in the Wizard of Oz*. “The implied message here was that when even a child, such as Dorothy, kills someone who is seen to *deserve* killing... it is no more problematic than killing say, a rat, a snake, or a cockroach” (44). However, Farias and I seem to be in the minority on this score.

fourth witch image in the film. The most logical character to fill this role is the protagonist Dorothy. A Wiccan could recognize Dorothy's empowering journey as parallel to the Wiccan identity. The ultimate immanence of her power (coming from within rather than from an outside source) speaks to a Wiccan worldview.

Two important images associated with the witches in Oz are the ruby slippers and the broomstick, which symbolize the male/female duality significant in Wiccan beliefs. Paul Nathanson suggests the ruby slippers represent "the menstrual flow that defines femaleness" and the witch's broomstick represents "the phallus that defines maleness" (85). He claims the Wicked Witch of the West wants the ruby slippers because she wants to reclaim femininity. For a brief moment, Dorothy represents the androgyny of male and female for her possession of both the slippers and the broom. She stands as the most powerful figure in Oz for that moment, but she willingly relinquishes that power so the wizard can give her "home." Yet, the wizard cannot bring her home. He tells her male companions that they have all they need already within, but his solution for her is nothing but hot air. Glinda returns to tell her she can find her way home by looking within herself and using her slippers/femininity. The ruby slippers are the most important magical tool used in the film, and in fact, Glinda's description of the "magic slippers" is the only time the word "magic" is used (Langley et al 128). In the end, when Glinda reveals the knowledge that the ruby slippers can take her home, she is asked why she did not reveal this before. She answers that Dorothy "had to learn it for herself," reinforcing the individual agency that most Wiccans believe to be the foundation of all magic.

L. Frank Baum created four distinct witch images which were then embodied and reified through the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*. By redefining the name "witch" as a "woman of power, whether good or bad," Baum opened the possibility for modern Witches to be "good." However, the imagery provided in the film complicates this duality, as some Witches find more

power in the green-skinned, fiery images of the Wicked Witch of the West, who is supposedly evil, than they do in the fairy godmother image of Glinda the Good. Oz provides a strong basis on which to form an identity 'Witch,' though these images must be viewed within the context of modern Witchcraft.

### **We Dream Lots of Silly Things -The Need for Secrecy in *The Wizard of Oz***

The second identity marker of Wiccan culture, the need for and practice of secrecy, can be identified more clearly in the film than in the book. In the original book Dorothy actually journeys to Oz, and when she returns others acknowledge her journey. In the film adaptation, her entire Oz experience is trivialized by others as a dream. As she tries to tell of her transformative experience, Aunt Em dismisses her by saying, "Oh, we dream lots of silly things" (Langley et al 131). When she tells them more about it, they all laugh. She says, "Doesn't anyone believe me?" and Uncle Henry responds in a patronizing tone, "Of course we believe you..." (132). She has this incredibly empowering experience in Oz, but her family immediately treats her like a child, patronizes her, and dismisses her as silly. Witches often have their experiences trivialized by others and are encouraged to keep those experiences private. This contributes to the Wiccan need for secrecy.

The 1985 film sequel *Return to Oz* magnifies those fears as Aunt Em takes Dorothy, unable to sleep after her previous trip to Oz, to an electric shock therapist. This sequel, based on a combination of two of the Oz book sequels, mirrors the 1939 film by having a Kansas sequence where Dorothy encounters many of the characters and images she later meets in Oz. Screenplay writers Walter Murch and Gill Dennis entirely created this opening sequence. Aunt Em reminds Dorothy "not to talk about Oz" because it's "just [her] imagination" in the first few moments of the film. Aunt Em then takes Dorothy to an asylum. With the foreboding music, thunder and lightning, screams from "damaged patients locked in the cellar," and a creepy

doctor and nurse who later become Dorothy's antagonists in *Oz*, this film provides much more disturbing imagery than the original *Oz* film. The fear of being labeled "crazy" or "delusional" if they share their experiences certainly keeps many Witches from openly sharing their Witch identities. However, mainstream acceptance of Wicca as a religion has drastically increased since the filming of *The Wizard of Oz*. As musical theatre scholar Michelle Boyd quips, "Today, though, a girl of Dorothy's age is as likely to practice witchcraft as she is to fear it. Time has loosened the witch's stronghold over public fear and moved her into the realm of fairytales and Halloween paraphernalia" (97). Yet, the fears of persecution keep many Witches firmly hidden in the broom closet, and perhaps with good reason. Despite changes in society, there is still a perceived danger in representing oneself Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, mostly because of the negative and "immoral" connotations the identity and practice brings to the minds of many outside the subculture. The need for secrecy maintains many Wiccans marginalization, and, when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, this identity marker can be recognized in the disbelief of Dorothy's family.

### **Are You a Good Witch or a Bad Witch? Morality in *The Wizard of Oz***

The third identity marker of flexible boundaries between good and evil evolves in the film from the representation in the book. This screen version reinforces the binary between good and bad witches in *Oz*, but my Wiccan reading complicates the polarity. Upon her arrival, Glinda immediately asks Dorothy, "Are you a good witch - or a bad witch?" (Langley et al 53), though Baum's novel used the term "wicked," not "bad." The word "wicked" derives from "wicca," a form of "wizard," which was used in relation to "wretched" as far back as 1275, though F. Scott Fitzgerald uses the word "wicked" as slang for an "ironic sense of 'wonderful'" in a short story in 1920 (Harper "Wicked"). Yet the film implies the two terms are synonymous. Selfishness and vengeance motivate the Wicked Witch's actions, while Glinda's altruism earns

the audience's admiration and trust. Darren Main suggests, "The Bad Witch is motivated by fear and uses her co-creative powers, consciously or unconsciously, to gain pleasure and to avoid pain," (53). The Wicked Witch consistently gets compared to the ego in spiritual analyses of the film.<sup>53</sup> Ego must be dissolved if a spiritual seeker is to find their way home. She acts as the primary antagonist, the creator of drama, in the film, and thus she drives the plot. "Not unlike the movie, she makes our lives interesting" claims Main (66).

Though the Wicked Witch gets figured as an antagonist in the movie, a Wiccan reading highlights the fact that she acts not out of pure avarice but out of fear and loss. Her actions, while not "nice," cause little actual harm. She threatens Dorothy and her friends, watches the travelers' progress in her crystal ball (a classic image of divination), casts a poisonous spell on the field of poppies using a mortar and pestle (tools many Witches would recognize as implements of Witchcraft), and commands the winged monkeys to capture Dorothy and Toto. She also commands the Winkies to kill Toto, imprisons Dorothy, overturns an hourglass as a direct threat to Dorothy's life, and sets the Scarecrow on fire. While her longing for power and threats seem quite selfish, the Wicked Witch is the only character acting out of loss. Her first words are an inquiry about the death of her sister, and her strongest motivation throughout is to get her sister's shoes which she believes should belong to her. While not exactly a sympathetic character, the Wicked Witch of the West is more complicated than at first glance.

When viewing through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I read the Wicked Witch of the West as an initiator, giving Dorothy the necessary trials to find her way home. For all her smoke and bluster, the Wicked Witch's actions are hardly more selfish than Dorothy's actions. In *The Zen of Oz*, Joey Green calls Dorothy "nothing more than a self-centered child" (96). In Kansas she offers to go to bed without supper, "hardly an act of self-sacrifice" and runs away

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<sup>53</sup> See Darren Main's *Spiritual Journeys Along the Yellow Brick Road* and Javier Farias *Spiritual Symbolism in the Wizard of Oz* for two very different analyses that both compare the Wicked Witch of the West to ego.



from home “never thinking for a moment how this cowardly act will devastate her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry” (96). Ultimately, Dorothy sacrifices offers to make sacrifices out of love for Toto, and when his life is truly threatened she offers to give the witch her ruby slippers. While the Wicked Witch’s hourglass is usually viewed as a direct death threat, symbolically it also could be viewed as a reference to the fleeting nature of time. Dorothy’s journey intensifies when she is shown how little time she has left. She must face her initiator (her fears) and dissolve them through an act of compassion (by trying to extinguish the Scarecrow who is on fire). She then makes a compassionate sacrifice for Toto when she gives up her trip home in the wizard’s hot air balloon to chase him. She has learned the power of self-sacrifice. Green claims this allows her to “earn the karmic right to return to Kansas” (99). Through the initiation of the Wicked Witch, Dorothy is able to receive the final message of Glinda the Good.

Glinda’s role as Good Witch is easy to recognize as “the self-actualized Good Witch, who uses magic to help others gain control over their own destiny” (Green 108). In the book *Spiritual Journeys Along the Yellow Brick Road*, Darren Main describes Glinda as “the spirit of guidance... the principle in nature that inspires trees to blossom in the spring and reminds birds that it is time to fly south in the winter” (49). The idea of Glinda as a type of mother Goddess, protecting and encouraging Dorothy on her quest, appeals to Wiccan beliefs. Main continues by describing the witches in Oz as representing our ability to be “co-creators with the Divine... When we co-create as a good witch, we heal the planet” (51). Glinda’s power to encourage, protect, and heal while identifying Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens can be a powerful encouragement to Witches who strive for these same goals. But, while she acts as an important guide, Glinda fails to intervene when Dorothy is in the most danger. Her goodness never seems to cost her anything, so she can hardly be seen as selfless.

Many Witches rebel against the stereotype of Glinda's saccharin-sweet, cotton-candy image, prompting them to claim the wickedness of the West Witch as a positive element. In practice, some Neo-Pagans express identity through the icon of the Wicked Witch of the West, while others enjoy playing with the duality. Wiccans identify with the word "wicked" based on its similarity to Wicca, the word Gardner chose to name modern Witchcraft. For example, a common idiom in Wicca is "Something Wiccan this way comes," substituting "Wicca" for "wicked" as a play on words from the well-known Shakespearean phrase. Neo-Pagan bumper stickers include the following: "Are you a good witch or a bad witch?," "Come out, come out wherever you are," "Don't make me get out my flying monkeys," "The Witch of the West was framed!" and "Things haven't been the same since that house fell on my sister." While I'm not suggesting that Wicca can be defined through its use of bumper stickers, these are presentations of identity that some Witches choose to interface with the broader world.

Another significant example of how the Wicked Witch of the West is accepted by modern witches is the song "Three Witches" by a popular Neo-Pagan singing group called Spiral Rhythm that performs mostly at east coast Pagan festivals. In this song, they contrast the traditional Wiccan texts of the "Witches Rune" and an extended version of the "Wiccan Rede"<sup>54</sup> with the infamous "Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble" passage from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, focusing on the line "Something *wicked* this way comes." The song ends with a Wicked Witch cackle and three iconic lines from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*: "I'm melting," "Poppies," and "I'll get you my pretty," mimicking Hamilton's drawl. The effect of the juxtaposed texts is a powerful blending of images and symbols. At a festival, modern Witches dance and sing along, enthusiastic about the comparison and identifying with these witch images that have previously been ostracized and vilified.

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<sup>54</sup> These texts are well-known as "traditional" Wiccan texts and were likely written by Doreen Valiente and Gerald Gardner and are used by many Wiccans in rituals today (Farrar 45).

I believe Witches tend to identify more with the Wicked Witch of the West than with Glinda because the Wicked Witch resonates with their purposeful marginalization. As Rushdie asserts, “[Just] as feminism has sought to rehabilitate pejorative old words such as hag, crone, witch, so the Wicked Witch of the West could be said to represent the more positive of the two images of powerful womanhood” (43). He calls Glinda a “trilling pain in the neck,” but the Wicked Witch “lean and mean” (42). The Wicked Witch emerges as a more powerful image and icon, and she especially appeals to Witches who are attracted to the edge of danger and darkness. Some Wiccans have sought to claim not only pejorative words, but also the stereotypical images like the Wicked Witch of the West. As they view the world from a marginalized position, they empathize with the Wicked Witch of the West in her “loneliness.” Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the Wiccan audience was poised and ready to re-imagine the Wicked Witch. The book *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire and the Broadway musical it inspired gives a new perspective on the witches of Oz.

### **Wiccafying the Witch in the Musical *Wicked***

The Broadway musical *Wicked* opened in New York on October 30, 2003. When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, *Wicked* offers a dynamic representation of identity for Witches. The stage adaptation plays off the imagery in the film, and the Wiccan spectator can easily locate my three identity markers relating to Wiccan culture. As a recent mega-musical, *Wicked* has inspired plenty of popular reviews but only a few scholarly critical analyses. Stacy Wolf has written two articles about how this musical can be viewed from a “queer” perspective. Wolf contends, “My reading demonstrates that popular forms in mainstream venues can bring progressive values to wide audiences” (*Defying* 6). I do agree with Wolf about the queer

images,<sup>55</sup> though I argue that a Wiccan perspective adds new dimensions and value to the story, a different type of queering or “wiccafyng,” bringing progressive views about Witchcraft to wide audiences and providing excellent resources for Wiccan performance and identity. A more recent article, “Alto on a Broomstick: Voicing the witch in the musical *Wicked*” (2010) by musical theatre scholar Michelle Boyd, contextualizes the musical within contemporary Witchcraft. “By situating *Wicked* within the context of scholarly discourse concerning contemporary representations of witches,” Boyd explains, “we can see how the mix of theatrical and cinematic conventions for depicting female witchcraft that Elphaba’s singing embodies make her – like other pop-culture witches – a heroine with limited powers” (99). Ultimately, marginalization limits Witches, and though the imagery provided in *Wicked* shows a drastic improvement over previous performances, the stereotypes win in the end. Only by reinterpreting the image can modern Witches claim true empowerment.

*Wicked* reverses the witches’ roles, with Elphaba, the green-skinned “wicked” Witch of the West as protagonist in a complicated relationship with Glinda,<sup>56</sup> the bubbly “good” Witch of the North. While Glinda and Elphaba clearly dominate, all four of Baum’s witches appear in the musical *Wicked*. The headmistress of their magical school, Madame Morrible, can be seen as an elderly witch akin to Baum’s original Witch of the North. She is best known for her “weather magic” and acts as a catalyst for the entire story by recognizing Elphaba’s power, encouraging her to learn sorcery, introducing her to the wizard, creating the propaganda against her by naming her “witch,” and finally by causing the cyclone which brings Dorothy to

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<sup>55</sup> She argues that the two main characters, Elphaba and Glinda, “are constructed as a queer couple” in the musical (*Defying* 6). I completely agree that the relationship between the two women is the most dynamic relationship in the musical, but I believe that for Witches the connection to “witch” images is more significant than the queer images.

<sup>56</sup> Though she is called Galinda through half of the musical, her name change does not enter my argument, so I call her Glinda throughout this chapter.

Oz.<sup>57</sup> The “Wicked Witch of the East” is given more characterization in the musical than in any other version of Oz, as Nessarose, Elphaba’s disabled sister. Nessarose recalls the negative stereotype of “dependent” young woman. Because of their lack of power, both Madame Morrible and Nessarose use power over others, while Glinda and Elphaba choose power shared. Madame Morrible and Nessarose are the Wicked Witches and are punished through the course of the play. Audiences sympathize with both Glinda and Elphaba who are both active and independent in making choices instead of letting events control them.

The first Wiccan identity marker, the name and image of “witch,” can be recognized as Elphaba transforms into the Wicked Witch of the West through the first act of the play. Boyd agrees, “With her green skin, black clothes, and flying broom Elphaba matches our physical conception of a witch... she embraces her witch ancestry, and classic ‘wicked witch’ mannerisms infuse her vocal performance” (99). While in the film *The Wizard of Oz* the Wicked Witch of the West was specifically designed to be “ugly,” *Wicked* presents the character in a completely different way. Elphaba, born with unnaturally green skin, must overcome the restrictions that people place on her based on physical appearance. As theatre critic John Moore comments, “We believe she's wicked simply because we're told so and because she doesn't conform with our notions of beauty and therefore goodness.” Thus, the musical recalls the connotations built by the film. Various characters react in horror at first to her green skin, but then they mock and ridicule her. However, Elphaba’s appearance does not fully fit the standard of ugliness associated with wickedness. As Joseph Dulude II, the makeup designer, explains, “Elphaba is not supposed to be ugly, she’s supposed to be beautiful. People just hate her because she’s green” (Cote 129). Costume designer Susan Hilferty calls Idina Menzel, the

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<sup>57</sup> Dorothy never appears on stage in *Wicked*, as the entire story takes place on the edges, the margins, of the original *Wizard of Oz* story. In many ways Elphaba’s story mirrors Dorothy’s journey in the original story.

actress who originated the role on Broadway, “unbelievably gorgeous,” so she knew the designs would be flattering. Hilferty’s costume designs provide the most striking visual contrast between Elphaba, with dark patterns and textures of “stalagmites and fossils” woven into her costumes (120), and Glinda, whose costumes Hilferty describes as “champagne... It’s light, it’s effervescent, it’s magical. A sense of the unattainable that sets us up for the world” (“Wicked”). Glinda is defined by the most traditional standards of physical beauty: blonde, petite and perky. Elphaba is dark, brunette, and earthy. When Glinda decides to give Elphaba a makeover in the song “Popular,” she calls Elphaba “the toughest case I’ve yet to face” (Cote 152). The entire song reminds the audience of the shallow basis on which people are judged, but for Elphaba it touches on something more deeply disturbing to think she could be “beautiful.” This contrast between the way one sees the self and the judgment of others fits into Elphaba’s marginalization, a major theme of Wiccan cultural identity.

I observe Elphaba’s first signs of “witchiness” in the opening song, “No One Mourns the Wicked,” as she is described as both “female” and “wicked,” though in the musical the term “wicked” is not automatically equated with “bad.” As audiences are aware that she is the protagonist and heroine, the word “wicked” leans more toward the connotation of “cool” or the “ironic sense of wonderful.” The opening song leads into the flashback sequence of her birth, where we learn Elphaba is the product of adultery and a bottle of green elixir, recalling the novel *Wicked* and echoing the flying ointment. Her gender and the sexuality of her mother recall the earliest connotations of witchcraft from *The Malleus Maleficarum* of Kramer and Sprenger. But then we immediately shift to the witch as we’ve known her in the twentieth century since *The Wizard of Oz*, when at birth, “Like a froggy, ferny cabbage the baby is unnaturally green” (143). The premise of the play, like Maguire’s novel, was one explored long ago by Kermit the Frog – it’s just not easy being green.

Elphaba's supernatural abilities appear early in the play when Madame Morrible threatens to take her sister away from her and she loses control, causing things to fly about. She previously had negative feelings about her powers, but Madame Morrible convinces her that magical abilities can be positive. Her strongest desire is to "make good." The song where she reveals this, "The Wizard and I," could be interpreted as dramatic irony for an audience who knows the conclusion of the story. First, she idolizes the wizard, anticipating a positive relationship with him and even imagining the Wizard "degreenifying" her so that she will be more widely accepted. Then she imagines that someday there will be a celebration throughout Oz in her honor, and she'd be so happy she could "melt" (144). Though the character sings with a strong sense of hope, for the audience these words set up a tragedy, for we know already that the Wizard is a sham, unable to produce any sort of actual magic. She never is accepted, and the celebration comes in honor of her death when she literally melts (at least according to all the audience knows of Oz prior to the musical).

The next layers that build Elphaba into a stereotypical witch are completely superficial but immediately recognizable by the audience - her costume. Costume designer Susan Hilferty really emphasizes the contrast between Glinda and Elphaba, beginning with their school clothes. She says, "By using blue and white as the school colors, I was able to have Elphaba all in blue, and Glinda all in white. The goal was to make the two women be the most outstanding thing in every world they entered" (Barbour 18). Hilferty also put Elphaba in "heavy boots, so right away she's connected to the earth, and then a cap that she pulls down low..." (Cote 120). As Elphaba connects more to others and to her own power, she changes into lighter-weight shoes. Though Hilferty never dresses Elphaba in complete black, she uses a combination of dark colors to create the illusion of black. "I see her as connected to things that are inside the earth. So the patterns and textures I wove into her dress include fossils, stalactites, or striations

that you see when you crack a stone apart. I mixed different colors into her skirt, so everything is literally twisted..." (120). Wiccans recognize these earthy images as sacred, and Elphaba becomes a Green Goddess. Unlike Margaret Hamilton's Wicked Witch, Idina Menzel (and others playing the role) do not hunch over or hide their heart center. At the beginning of the play Menzel's posture illustrates insecurity, but as she grows into her power, she stands straight and tall. Rather than using a nasal voice, Menzel uses a deep, resonant voice, both in speaking and also in belting out her songs. The overall image is of depth and darkness, and as "danger" and "darkness" draws some to the image and name of Witchcraft, many Witches resonate with and appreciate this image.

In complete contrast, Glinda's sparkling lightness brings the sky to earth. Hilferty connects Glinda to "the sky, sun, and stars. That influenced her tiara and wand. The sparkles on her dress are all about that, too. She symbolizes lightness, air, bubbles" (120). Glinda's connection to bubbles directly references the 1939 film, and the costumes overall work to reinforce the images of goodness and wickedness, clearly the strongest visual binaries in the play. Witches also can resonate with Glinda's light and celestial imagery and especially would appreciate the balance between the two. Kristin Chenoweth, originator of the role on Broadway, uses a high, nasal voice and sings in a very high soprano. Everything about Glinda suggests "air," and she might even be described as "air-headed." Yet, she also gives a tremendous amount of comic relief, with her mispronunciation of words, bright and bouncy dancing, and ineffective magic. She titles her entrance essay for Madame Morrible's sorcery seminar "Magic Wands: Need They Have a Point?" and later when she receives her "training wand" she complains "Is this thing on?" when it doesn't work. The lighthearted Glinda contrasts the dark and deep Elphaba. As Glinda finds more depth through her relationship with Elphaba, Witches find another character to connect to their own experiences.



The building of Elphaba as “witch” continues as she acquires her magical hat, book and broom. First, as a joke, Glinda gives Elphaba an unfashionable, pointed black hat with a wide brim. She sings, “It’s really...uh... sharp. Don’t you think? You know--black is this year’s pink. You deserve each other, this hat and you. You’re both so smart” (150). In my first chapter, I traced possible folkloric interpretations of the conical witch’s hat, though the actual history of this iconic image remains shrouded. Religious Witches appreciate the symbolism of the conical hat, sometimes relating it to the “cone of power” that is raised in magic.<sup>58</sup> Its connection to horns represents the Horned God of Witchcraft or the cornucopia of the harvest for some Witches. Most Witches do not wear conical hats often, either in daily life or in ritual, but the conical hat is such an important part of the witch icon that many Witches have claimed it as a fun part of their “witchiness.”

Elphaba performs most of her magical tasks using the *Grimmerie*, a magical book full of spells. The Wizard describes this important plot device as “a recipe book for change” (Holzmann 37). Madame Morrible explains the language of the *Grimmerie* as “the lost language of spells” which she spent years learning how to decipher minimally (37). Elphaba reads the *Grimmerie* with ease, and with it she discovers remarkable powers. She transforms regular monkeys into flying monkeys, enchants a broom into flying, and empowers her sister Nessarose to walk by enchanting her shoes. She also inadvertently creates Dorothy’s three companions while trying to save their lives: she sets the cowardly Lion free as a child but terrifies him into becoming cowardly, saves the life of a munchkin named Boq after Nessarose tries through magic to remove his heart, turning him into the Tin Man, and then casts a spell that effectively transforms her lover into a living scarecrow to keep him from being beaten and killed. These

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<sup>58</sup> Starhawk describes the “Cone of Power” as energy which a coven may raise during ritual. “The base of the cone is the circle of coveners; its apex can focus on an individual, an object, or a collectively visualized image” (*Spiral Dance* 146).

fantastic, special-effects laden magical spells look nothing like most modern Witches' magic, but when viewing through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I identify the *Grimmerie* with the Wiccan "Book of Shadows."<sup>59</sup> The term *Grimmerie* likely derives from "grimoire," a name given to magical textbooks dating back to the Middle Ages. Witches recognize the symbolic representation of a book of power. Elphaba ultimately uses the *Grimmerie* to achieve her individual agency, which appeals to the Wiccan spectator.

Elphaba's flying broomstick completes the Wicked Witch image. As I explained in my first chapter, witches were often accused of flying on brooms during the witch trials and may have used hallucinogenic "flying ointments" applied by broomstick to vaginal membranes (Harner 131). The sexual connotations of the broomstick were both real and symbolic. A witch in flight used male power, the phallus, to transcend above the female, physical realm into the vertical, heavenly realm. In the Oz film, the vertical realm belonged to Glinda and the Wizard. The Wicked Witch came up from and descended into the earth. While she did fly on a broom, her flight was strictly horizontal. In the musical, Elphaba rejects all limitations in the song "Defying Gravity." Up to this point in the play, Elphaba longs to fit in, but when the Wizard pressures her to act against her conscience, she makes a dynamic and powerful choice. The image of Elphaba rising vertically center stage and holding her broom high, combined with the lyrics of Schwartz's "Defying Gravity," presents a complicated transformation from the traditional stereotype. As Schwartz explains, "I wanted a series of simple notes that sounded like strength, coming into your own, feeling the power come up from below, from your feet and spreading up through your body... I wanted the music to be powerful and empowering and thrilling" (Cote 80). Just as Elphaba's costumes represent images from beneath the earth,

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<sup>59</sup> Scott Cunningham defines: "The Book of Shadows is a Wiccan workbook containing invocations, ritual patterns, spells, runes, rules governing magic, and so on. Some Books of Shadows are passed on from one Wiccan to another, usually upon initiation, but the vast majority of Books today are composed by each individual Wiccan" (34).

through both melody and lyrics of this song, Elphaba arises from the earth, transforming her femininity into her power. When she sings, “Something has changed within me. Something is not the same. I’m through with playing by the rules of someone else’s game,” (161) her reasonable defiance challenges the audience’s expectations of the image. She takes it further with, “It’s time to trust my instincts, close my eyes and leap” (161). Intuition has long been opposed to reason, and the realm of the vertical belonged to reason. In the juxtaposition of Elphaba’s words with the image of her rising on the stage, Witches recognize their own ability to trust themselves. She may be “flying solo” but she claims the freedom to make her own decisions, ungrounded by the prejudices and choices of others.

Yet, even this image of power can be seen from a different perspective. In comparing Elphaba to other contemporary witch images where girls “lost control” due to their power,<sup>60</sup> Boyd claims, “Her unbridled singing is almost *too* powerful; it seems inevitable that at any moment she will be consumed by her magic – like *Buffy’s* Willow and *The Craft’s* teenage girls – and begin her downward spiral into stereotypical witchiness” (112). If the musical had ended with this showstopper, the entire message would be one of overcoming otherness and reclamation of power. However, this is only the end of the first act. In the second act, Elphaba must face the very real consequences for her societal difference, not just in her appearance, but also in her actions of female power.

### **The Witch Hunt – The Need for and Practice of Secrecy in *Wicked***

Individual agency can be seen as a liability by those who wish to maintain power. Elphaba’s actions directly lead to the witch hunt of the second act, illustrating how society fears and persecutes those who refuse subservience. Boyd suggests, “Despite the witch’s many new

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<sup>60</sup> See Marion Gibson’s analysis of the witch characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *The Craft*, concluding that “at the turn of the twentieth century witches could still be represented as sexual predators, lesbian ‘deviants,’ and antimaternal villainesses” (182).

faces, her wicked sister is still alive and firmly entrenched in our cultural imagination; although her power may be diluted, she has never lost her ability to cause mass fear" (114). This highlights the second Wiccan identity marker, the need for and practice of secrecy. In *Wicked*, Elphaba conceals her magical abilities, as she explains in the song "The Wizard and I" by describing it as "this weird quirk I've tried to suppress or hide...." Her marginalization is based on her magical abilities as much as it is on her appearance. In the second act, the society in Oz reacts to the fully-formed witch through rumors, a "witch hunt," her melting, and finally her reemergence. The play reinforces the Renaissance images of witch persecution. "Most of her reputation as evil is based in hearsay and gossip," claims theatre critic John Moore. The second act opens with villagers spreading rumors about Elphaba, including that "her soul is so unclean pure water can melt her" (165), but this is presented as just a rumor. In fact, in an earlier scene, Elphaba sings a song standing out in the rain, defying all previous images of the Wicked Witch in relation to water. The idea of water melting her is a delusion of the villagers. These rumors reinforce the fantasy witch's role as marginalized and on the edge of society and reflect the religious Witch's perceived marginalization and need for secrecy.

Elphaba chooses to escape persecution by faking her own death, a choice which she keeps secret even from Glinda. According to Schwartz, by repeating the opening song in the finale the audience can recognize how ironic the opening was. "At the beginning, we took it at face value: The Witch was bad. She is dead. We're glad. And no one is sorry. Now we realize how complicated and multifaceted her story was... But the villagers don't know Elphaba's story; they accept the myth of the Wicked Witch of the West... joyfully but discordantly" (Cote 87). Though the villagers keep repeating the "goodness" of her death, the audience knows the story now. Gregory Maguire agrees from watching the play that "there is still a hugely bittersweet feeling to the ending" (73). The sweetness in the end of the musical suggests a

reemergence of the Wicked Witch image that is different from all of its previous incarnations. Witches resonate with her reemergence and her need to keep herself secret from those who persecuted her, much like in their mythistory they envision themselves as reemerging from years of domination.<sup>61</sup> Like Dorothy in the film, they long to find “someplace where there isn’t any trouble” (Langley et al 39). Of the four witches represented, the only witch in the end of *Wicked* who defies persecution or perceived death is Glinda the Good. Nessarose has died by way of a falling house, Elphaba fakes her own death, and Madame Morrible is arrested for her crimes. “*Wicked* reveals that the modern world is still a difficult place for a witch. The gentle ‘white’ witch who abides by the rules can now hope to achieve the American dream, but the unassimilable witch, the ambitious witch, and the witch who ‘defies gravity’ still encounter a rocky path ahead of them” (Boyd 114). When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, a modern Witch might identify with all four of the witch characters, but there are consequences to crossing the lines of what society deems appropriate.

### **What Does It Mean to Be “Wicked”?**

The Wiccan spectator can identify the final cultural identity marker of flexible boundaries between good and evil in the musical *Wicked*, which challenges the polarity through the language and imagery presented. The very first word the audience hears in the musical is “good” and the last word is “wicked.” The musical takes us on a journey from goodness to wickedness and everywhere in between. In fact, while the musical is titled *Wicked* and is ostensibly about the Wicked Witch of the West, the actual word “wicked” is only mentioned 51 times in the libretto, while the word “good” is found 92 times. This theme and exploration of goodness is not nearly as prevalent in Maguire’s novel, just as the binary of good and evil was not as inherent in Baum’s novel as it was in the 1939 film. The visual enactment and

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<sup>61</sup> Magliocco’s calls these the “sacred narratives” of Witchcraft which need not be literally true to create an identity of opposition (*Witching Culture* 188-190).

embodiment of theatre and film require stronger tensions and less internal conflict. “We think we know them so well from what we've seen on *The Wizard of Oz*. They become almost like friends because we have seen the movie so many times. Definitely everybody's black and white, good or evil,” explains theatre critic Lisa Traiger. “‘Wicked,’ on the other hand, is colored with shades of gray, uncertainties and missed opportunities” (20). The sign systems of these characters are mutable, able to reflect the changing needs of the audience and appealing to the Wiccan spectator who identifies with defying mainstream expectations.

Each character in *Wicked* makes choices out of positive motivations, though some of their choices could be defined as “selfish.” At first, the roles of Glinda and Elphaba seem merely reversed from traditional stereotypes, as Glinda, the popular girl, treats Elphaba poorly because of the color of her skin. In fact, theatre critic Mark Steyn strongly criticizes the play for this: “The plot is complicated but boring because, once you get the premise, all the rest is geometric re-positioning: the moral high ground is a fetid swamp, light is dark, good is evil, normal is weird, weird is normal – although, to anyone who’s read Baum, in Oz it always was” (Steyn 64). However, I see moments of ambiguity for each witch more clearly in the musical than any of their earlier incarnations. Though subtle, Glinda introduces the first sympathetic connotation towards Elphaba in the very first song. While the chorus celebrates the death of the Wicked Witch, Glinda sings: “And goodness knows the wicked’s lives are lonely. Goodness knows the wicked die alone” (Cote 140). While no one else mourns the death of the “Wicked Witch,” Glinda provides a small opening into seeing her as a full person.

Elphaba attempts several acts of selflessness, but public reaction twists each negatively. In the song “No Good Deed,” Elphaba questions her own motivations: “Was I really seeking good, or just seeking attention?” (171). She then declares her frustration at her lack of power in helping those around her, as “No good deed goes unpunished” (171). She claims the

accusations others have made about her: "Let all Oz be agreed: I'm wicked through and through" (171). However, she still does not pursue harmful actions even after this declaration. Many Witches express a similar tension and recognize Elphaba's struggle to make ethical choices amidst public denouncement.

Glinda finds power through more traditional means, first by her physical beauty and later by submitting to the Wizard's regime even though she knows he is up to no good. In this way, Glinda is just as limited by her appearance as Elphaba, and her expectations of herself drive her choices and compromises. While Elphaba's anger strengthens her resolve, Glinda chooses to conform to expectations, crossing her own boundaries in order to rise in a social hierarchy. Due to her cooperation, the Wizard declares her "Glinda the Good" and gives her some political power, but in her song "Thank Goodness," she expresses moments of regret for the separation between her and Elphaba, describing the "cost" of "getting your dreams" (165). Glinda represents the price of following cultural expectations against personal standards, reflected in her lines, "There are bridges you cross you didn't know you'd crossed until you've crossed..." (Cote 165). Neither woman makes entirely good decisions or bad decisions, but rather the audience participates in moral questioning with them.

What does it mean to be wicked? L. Frank Baum redefined the image of witches by allowing for the dichotomy of "good" witches in contrast with "wicked" witches, but the sign of wicked witch continues to mutate and change through various adaptations of the story. Immortalized on screen, the Wicked Witch of the West of 1939 reified the image of a horrific, green-skinned nightmare. The musical *Wicked* complicates this image, breaking the binary of good and evil. I suggest that "wickedness," as it is explored in the musical, is a new category in itself, outside the binary or perhaps based on the union or coming together of these opposites. Glinda and Elphaba each act in selfish and selfless ways. Somewhere between wretched and

wonderful, the sign chain brings new meaning when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens. This is the wickedness evoked by the four witches in the Broadway musical, a wickedness defying all expectations.

If read correctly, a stage musical has opportunity to challenge expectations and can change the lives of audience members. Wolf proposes in her book *A Problem Like Maria*, "A spectator's identifications are flexible and can shift across identity positions, even within the social situation of a single performance. Spectators can also identify with more than one character at a time" (25). Thus, a Witch can see herself simultaneously as Glinda, striving for popularity and willing to cross internal boundaries, and Elphaba, striving to maintain constancy in the face of rejection. Though few choose to identify with the less powerful Nessarose and Madame Morrible, their presence balances the female images. *Wicked* offers alternatives to traditional images and empowers all women to defy the boundaries of gender, sexuality, and religion. In her article "Defying Gravity: Queer Conventions in the musical *Wicked*," Wolf argues Elphaba's green skin does not represent race or disability (10). Could her otherness be interpreted on the basis of religion? While the magic practiced by Wiccans looks drastically different from the stage effects that give wings to monkeys and allow Elphaba to fly, the performed representation of Elphaba's marginalization and subsequent choices serves to reinforce and validate choices made by Witches. Through the combination of music, spectacle, and recognizable characters, producer Mark Platt claims, "Audiences laugh and applaud and cheer its sets, music, and costumes. But, at the end of the day, they leave the theater feeling different from when they walked in" (Cote 180). For the spectator viewing through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the play transforms an image of "witch" ingrained in their minds, allowing for the possibility of something more.



## No Place Like Home

Wiccans segregate themselves from other religions and mainstream society. The marginalization of Witches developed out of their mythistory relating to Renaissance persecution, and many modern Witches maintain their separateness based on a fear of modern-day persecution and ridicule. The three identity markers of Wiccan culture in the Oz books, films, and plays help the Wiccan spectator to identify with a community of other Witches. By choosing the name and image of “Witch,” recognizing the power in secrets, and redefining the boundaries between good and evil, Witches purposefully marginalize themselves into a clear identity group. Some Witches take this marginalization to an extreme by avoiding groups altogether, preferring to practice as “solitary” Witches.<sup>62</sup> Others who feel lost or rejected by mainstream society specifically search until they find a group where they feel accepted. The musical serves to create even more solidarity and reinforce “witch” images. Yet, the witches of Oz reinforce the marginalization of Wiccan communities based on fear and misunderstanding. When describing the process of identifying their religious preferences, many Witches say it is like “coming home.” But this home is problematic in regard to the rest of society. While Witches may identify with Dorothy’s message, “There’s no place like home,” they also often feel lost or isolated based on their differences. Truly, for some Witches, there is no place like home.

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<sup>62</sup> See the Higginbothams’ *Paganism* (233) or Cunningham’s *Wicca for the Solitary Practitioner*. Also, Cowan identifies the tension between solitary and communal Witches as a primary issue within the movement (47-48). My study focuses on communal Witches, for I have found the elements of performance to have more effect when performed for an “audience.” Yet, no participant in a Wiccan ritual takes a passive role, for one of the main goals of this type of religious ritual is active participation.

### CHAPTER THREE: FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN - WICCAN BELIEFS IN NARNIA

Of the three fantasy texts I will analyze, the *Narnia* books and their theatrical and film adaptations are the most strongly associated with a specific religion - Christianity. Many assume the stories would have little relevance to Wiccans because their author, C.S. Lewis, a well-known theologian and Christian apologist, intentionally wrote the *Chronicles of Narnia* to explore Christian themes. Viewing Narnia through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens requires an active approach. Some Witches have purposefully avoided these books, plays, and movies because of the Christian symbolism, while others read the first book *The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe* specifically because it has a "witch" in the title.<sup>63</sup> Unlike the ugly, stereotypical wicked witches of folklore and Oz, witches in Narnia appear insidiously beautiful but evil to the core. While few Witches identify directly with these "witch" characters, some themes of Narnia touch a much deeper part of Wiccan beliefs than the superficial witch image. Wiccan beliefs focus on the connection to the sacred (sometimes called God, though in Wicca also often called Goddess or Spirit). By viewing through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, my analysis of Narnian performance texts focuses on the Earth-centered revelation of the sacred in Narnia.

C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) had ambivalent reception because some readers considered the "magical" and "mythological" aspects to be too "pagan." Christian author Marcus Brotherton warns, "While many readers won't think twice about the dark supernatural goings-on, many Christians will react with caution or concern" (337).

Brotherton's essay, "The Meaning of Magic in Narnia," appears in a resource guide aimed at Christian parents. Throughout the guide, parents and kids are warned that while magic in

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<sup>63</sup> According to Pagan scholar Peg Aloi, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was first read by a lot of Pagans "cuz we knew it had a WITCH in it!" but they found enough value in the story to include it on their "precious list of formative, epiphany-inducing texts that we believe every pagan worth his or her ritually consecrated salt should have read/viewed/listened to" (210).

Narnia can be positive or negative, in “real life” magic is dangerous and should be avoided. Richard Abanes, a Christian writer who scathingly criticizes other fantasy authors, argues that Lewis “firmly rooted his fantasy in Christian doctrines, morality, ethics, and biblical ideals relating to life, love, eternity, and spiritual growth” and so finds Lewis’s use of magic to be appropriate (122). Some Christian writers find Lewis’s use of magic entirely unacceptable. A website by Christian homemaker Mary Van Nattan claims C.S. Lewis is “perhaps the single most useful tool of Satan” for “introducing children to witchcraft through esoteric (hidden meanings) writings” in the Narnia books (3). While many criticize Van Natten,<sup>64</sup> she closely analyzes the books and recognizes some symbolism akin to the Wiccan identity markers.

Lewis denied the stories were “allegories,” preferring the term “supposal,” suggesting his stories are what might happen in a parallel world.<sup>65</sup> Others agree that the symbolism in the stories can be applied to other faith traditions. As Peter Schakel describes, “The use of myth allows other meanings to ray out from the stories” (*Reading* 17). Dickerson and O’Hara, scholars writing about fantasy, warn against trying to “force an allegorical meaning onto a particular work of fantasy...Reducing a rich narrative to its (real or imagined) allegorical value is much like reducing a person to a mere label” (58). *The Chronicles of Narnia* certainly contain symbols significant to Christians, but they also contain rich symbolism which appeals particularly to Witches and Neo-Pagans when viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

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<sup>64</sup> Neo-Pagan writer Peg Aloï expresses much disdain for this author, nicknaming the website “Salami’s Ass” rather “balaams-ass.com” (“Last of the Bibliophiles”) 213) and calling Mary Van Natten “Merry Vanquisher of Satan” (215). She discusses the article as “fundamentalist Christian paranoid rambling” (217). The website was brought to the attention of many bloggers through Catherine Seipp’s op-ed piece “‘Narnia’ naysayers” in which she calls their argument even “wackier than those from the left.”

<sup>65</sup> See Higgins “Letter from C.S. Lewis,” where Lewis responds specifically to the question of whether or not Narnia was meant as an allegory: “The Narnian books are not as much allegory as supposal. ‘Suppose there were a Narnian world and it, like ours, needed redemption. What kind of incarnation and Passion might Christ be supposed to undergo *there?*’”

While Lewis lived and died before the Neo-Pagan revival and his opinion of modern Witchcraft is unknown, historian Ronald Hutton claims that some of his autobiographical writings suggest he may have been open to Paganism:

Lewis knew of no organized pagan religion in Britain at the time, to which he might have turned instead... The nearest known equivalent consisted of the closed societies of ritual magicians, which sometimes did call on pagan deities, but they were few and secretive and he never encountered any active members of them. He admitted later (ungraciously) that they would have indeed held a powerful attraction for him" (218).

According to Hutton, Lewis used pagan myth liberally throughout Narnia, "with whole, often recurrent, categories of character... including pagan deities, operating as forces of benevolence or liberation" (222). Yet, Lewis characterizes all witches in his fantasy works as strictly evil. He described the mere concept of witchcraft as something to be feared. "For I take it that most of us even today can understand how a man could dread witches or 'spirits' while most of us imagine that a meeting with a nymph or a Triton, if it were possible, would be delightful," he suggested in *The Discarded Image*. Lewis further differentiated between "native figures" like witches from folklore and "classical" figures from myth. He suggests, "I think the reason is that the classical figures stand further - certainly in time and perhaps in other ways too - even from our half-beliefs, and therefore from even our imagined fears." (126). He considered witches to be closer to reality than other mythological figures, thus more dangerous.

*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950) is the most well-known of *The Chronicles of Narnia* and the most-often adapted for performance. This book includes the most easily identifiable symbolism related to Witchcraft and Paganism, though the other six include relevant symbols as well. This first book has been adapted into an animated movie (1979), two live-action television films (1976 and 1988), a full-scale theatrical film (2005) and at least four stage plays, including two musicals. The first major motion picture of Narnia was produced by Walden Media in 2005, with the sequels *Prince Caspian* (2008) and *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*

(2010). In this chapter I will focus my analysis on the musical *Narnia* (1987) and the film *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) for identity markers in the category of Earth-centered revelation of the sacred: 1) continuous revelation through a variety of sources, 2) views of Deity that are immanent and transcendent, male and female, and 3) the sanctity of nature in time and space. The negative witch characters and perceived overt Christian overtones cause some Witches hesitation in finding spiritual significance in the Narnia stories, but through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, looking “further up and further in,”<sup>66</sup> past this surface interpretation, the Wiccan spectator finds a “deeper magic” in Narnia.

### ***Narnia, the Musical: A Revelation of the Sacred***

The most popular stage adaptation of Lewis’s books is *Narnia*, a 1987 musical with book by Jules Tasca, music by Thomas Tierney, and lyrics by Ted Drachman. As a standard “book musical,” the music is fully integrated into the story with songs that drive the plot forward and reveal character. With fairly simple music, production is accessible for community and school theatre. While the music hardly touches the Broadway caliber of *Wicked*, the songs are fun and engaging. The play is structured in two acts with a running time just under two hours. Tasca, Tierney, and Drachman worked together on several commissioned musicals for New York City’s “Theatreworks/USA,” including this one. Theatreworks tours an adapted version of the musical.<sup>67</sup> According to Dramatic Publishing, hundreds of community theatres, churches, and occasionally professional regional theatres produce this musical throughout the United States, annually in some companies. A significant number of productions are planned for November and December as “holiday” shows (probably due to the winter imagery), though the play is

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<sup>66</sup> In the final Narnia book, *The Last Battle*, this phrase is used to inspire the “Friends of Narnia” to discover the truth of Aslan’s country beyond all illusions (185). As a “Friend of Narnia” myself, I endeavor to look past pre-existing interpretations of Narnia to find a Wiccan understanding of this text.

<sup>67</sup> See the “Dramatic Publishing” author biographies for more information about Tasca, Tierney, and Drachman.

offered at other times of the year as well. When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, this musical offers much more to Witches than the original book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. The primary plotline and key characters stay close to Lewis's original, but Drachman's lyrics suggest even more recognizable Wiccan imagery. Much like the musical *Wicked* brought out more Wiccan symbolism than *The Wizard of Oz*, the musical *Narnia* contains more symbols that resonates with Wiccan earth-centered beliefs than the books.

### **A Mythological Menagerie**

In this section I will focus on the first identity marker of earth-centered Wiccan beliefs: mythological eclecticism/syncretism. I find that Lewis's world of Narnia, and the musical *Narnia* in particular, provide a rich repository of eclectic mythic images. The musical begins with the children arriving at the professor's home in the country during World War II. The eclecticism of Narnian mythology can be seen in the very first song in the musical, "Doors and Windows." While ostensibly singing about Marbleton Manor, the song describes the professor's house as "a hodge-podge of odd architectural styles" including "most probably Celtic, or possibly, Viking," then "Gothic," "Late Anglo-Norman," "High Romanesque" and "Persian Grotesque" (6). This evokes the strange combination of cultures that will later be seen in the Narnian creatures. Lewis peopled his fantasy land of Narnia with an assortment of "good" mythical creatures, including satyrs, naiads, dryads, nymphs, centaurs, merfolk, and even Father Christmas. Most of these creatures developed directly out of classical "pagan" mythology. In addition to Greek and Roman mythology, Lewis was familiar with the myths of "Old Norse, Anglo-Saxon, Irish, and Welsh" and "prehistoric (if not perennial) folklore" (7). While criticized by some (including J.R.R. Tolkien) for this eclecticism,<sup>68</sup> Lewis's use of various sources appeals to the Wiccan concept of continuous revelation. His use and reinterpretation of

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<sup>68</sup> See George Sayer's biography *Jack: A Life of C.S. Lewis* (312) for a more full discussion of Tolkien's disagreement with Lewis about his practice of mixing mythologies.

classic mythology resonates with Wiccan uses of multiple mythological sources, and indeed allows the “potential” of Wicca to be seen within Narnia when viewed with the Wiccan dramaturgical lens.

The musical *Narnia* brings these eclectic fantasy characters to life on stage, giving directors, actors, and costume designers an opportunity to creatively embody the mythical characters. According to Tasca<sup>69</sup> in the production notes, “Narnia is inhabited by intelligent animals, creatures, and spirits as diverse as nature creates in our world and as mythology and fiction create in human imagination” (85). This diversity of mythology appeals to Wiccan eclecticism. Tasca calls for a distinction between two types of “good” Narnian creatures: “small, unthreatening animals (and female spirits such as Dryads and Naiads) and large, imposing ‘soldierly’ creatures (Bulls, Unicorns, Leopards, Eagles, etc.),” suggesting that the larger creatures be reserved for the army scenes while the “non-aggressive” creatures should be shown in the earlier scenes threatened by the White Witch. Tasca calls the White Witch’s followers “Cruelies,” which she names in the song “Murder Today” to include: phantoms and furies, ogres and ghouls, zombies and specters, boggles and cruels, vampires and demons, banshees and sprites, gorgons and hellions and fetches and frights (53-54). This mirrors the original list of dark creatures Lewis lists as the White Witch’s followers in the book (151). All of the Cruelies and other creatures derive from Greek, Roman, Germanic, Celtic and Islamic mythology as well as British folklore, though a few were invented by Lewis (Downing 141). While some specific animals and other creatures are listed in the script, directors are encouraged to shift characters according to the size of the cast and the specific needs of the production. “The careful director will use discretion in determining whether a particular line of dialogue might be plausibly delivered by a particular animal, spirit or Cruelie” (86). Thus, the

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<sup>69</sup> While I recognize that production notes and stage directions may not always be written by the “playwright,” I give credit to Jules Tasca, the bookwriter, for these descriptive notes.

non-principal characters and creatures could shift greatly depending on a director's choices and available cast, but a mixture of creatures inhabits the mythical land of Narnia.

The principal Narnian creatures also can be viewed with mythological significance, particularly Tumnus the Faun and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. Lewis created Narnia based on initial inspiration of an image of a faun carrying packages through a snowy wood, according to well-known Lewis scholar David Downing (12), and Tumnus is the first Narnian to meet the human characters (and audience). In the stage directions for the musical, Tasca merely describes Tumnus as "a half man, half-goat creature" (10). The mythic creature of the faun derives from Greek and Roman mythology and is often associated with Dionysus/ Bacchus, the god of wine and fertility. Bacchus is mentioned in the musical by Tumnus in the song "You Can't Imagine" as he recollects the "magical glow" of Narnia before the winter (19). In the original book Lewis describes Tumnus as having reddish skin, curly hair, brown eyes, a short pointed beard, horns on his forehead, cloven hooves, and goat legs with glossy black hair (10). Most stage costumers use earth tones and minimize the cloven hooves for Tumnus, creating a sympathetic and likeable character. The Wiccan spectator would consider the faun's associations with Greek and Roman mythology and fertility a point of positive identification.

Beavers represent virility, organization, and civilization in medieval folklore, and are credited with creating the world by some Native American legends. As a medievalist, Lewis was most likely inspired by European folklore in creating Mr. and Mrs. Beaver, but the Native American associations also have resonance for the Wiccan spectator.<sup>70</sup> In the production notes for the musical, Tasca recommends, "The animals may be suggested only; that is, the Beavers need only have beaver tails," and he strongly suggests the actors faces not be covered or

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<sup>70</sup> Some conflicts developed between various Native American tribes and Neo-Pagan groups based on possible cultural appropriation. See Magliocco for a brief outline of this conflict (216). Regardless, in my experience many Witches are attracted to Native American imagery and myth.



obscured (86). The Beavers' portrayal would be highly anthropomorphic, looking more like a man and woman than actual beavers. This would allow for greater characterization and connection with the characters than, for example, the BBC live action film (1988) which has an actor in full-body costume. The Wiccan spectator resonates with Beaver characters' positive images of domesticity and sexuality.

### **From the Inside Out: Deity Images in *Narnia***

The second identity marker relating to Wiccan beliefs gets to the core of the Wiccan religion through images of Deity. From a Wiccan perspective, while God or Goddess may have form on some transcendent, grand scale, priority is usually given to the "God or Goddess within." Deity images are also often seen as balancing the duality of male and female. Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, I identify many Wiccan Deity images in the musical *Narnia*. The most obvious Deity image in all Narnian books and adaptations is the lion Aslan. The musical especially emphasizes how Aslan's wisdom can be found "within," reinforcing the immanence of Deity. Each person touched by Aslan acts as the best version of his or herself, and through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens I interpret this as bringing out their inner divinity. Other male Deity images include Father Christmas, Professor Kirke, the White Stag, and the male children Peter and Edmund. Female Deity images are a bit more complicated, as the White Witch is often interpreted as strictly evil, but "dark" Goddesses like Hecate, Kali, and Morgan le Fay are recognized and honored within Wicca.<sup>71</sup> The White Witch is necessary and multi-layered as a fully motivated character in the musical *Narnia*. Other female Deity images include Lucy and Susan, the queens who balance the prophecy of Cair Paravel.

Aslan the lion is *Narnia*'s preeminent Deity figure, and many Neo-Pagans recognize the image as part of their own personal mythos. As Hutton points out, Lewis was clearly drawing

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<sup>71</sup> See the chapter "The Bright and Dark Mother" by practitioners Janet and Stewart Farrar in their book *The Witches Goddess* (18-23) for a succinct explanation of the dark Goddess.

on his knowledge of Frazer's *Golden Bough* and his appreciation for the Norse story of Balder the Beautiful, but also for his "constant identification with the natural world," which Neo-Pagans certainly appreciate. "He himself has an animal's form, and is called 'Lord of the whole wood' and 'King of the Beasts.' Animals almost all recognize and revere him at once, in contrast to humans, and he can reawaken the spirits of trees" (224). Within each Narnian story, children from "our" world interact with Aslan and receive direct revelation from him. The characters place precedence on their continuous personal experience with Aslan, though he usually appears toward the end of the stories rather than in the beginning. "Aslan is used right at the very end to sort things out and bring closure, a *deus ex excelsis* rather than a *deus ex machina*" explains literary scholar Joy Alexander (2). In the musical, the first words sung at the end of the overture are the lyrics "Aslan's on the move" (Tasca 5). The lion's movement motivates all change in Narnia, and the musical sets up anticipation from this very first moment. In the song "All of These," the four Pevensie children have significant reactions just to hearing Aslan's name for the first time. At the mere mention of his name Susan, Lucy and Peter each have a transcendent and visceral experience. Peter sings, "That name keeps chiming deep inside me like a song's insistent theme" (24). Susan and Lucy sing, "A name that wakens wondrous feelings like a word within a dream" (24). The only character who does not transcend at this point is Edmund, who was influenced by the White Witch. Aslan's name is a catalyst for the action, driving Edmund in one direction and the others in another. They each sing of how the name "Aslan" makes them feel: Susan feels "a lovely music in my soul," Peter feels "brave and daring to the quick," Lucy feels like summer vacation, but Edmund feels "sick." This reflects each of their characters, suggesting that Aslan meets each individual in unique and personal ways, bringing out meaning from within. Personal experience drives the story much like it drives a Witch's understanding of divine revelation.

The character of Aslan holds a self-contained and complete power, and this must show in the stage presence of the actor. Aslan has no need to grasp or show off his power, yet the power should be clear and absolute. The entire stage production could falter due to a disappointing portrayal of Aslan.<sup>72</sup> Tasca encourages a strong characterization through production notes: “The actor playing the Lion should ideally be physically imposing and a powerful singer. His manner should be regal, but not remote or cold” (86). In the stage directions, he enters with “a rush of wind and a monumental roar” (46). Tasca describes him as “a magnificent golden lion with a full mane and tail” (46). The children in the musical fear Aslan at first. In following the precedent set by Lewis, the musical presents Aslan as a being who inspires both fear and devotion. Literary critic Colin Manlove explains, “He radiates being to all about him. In him oppositions are not at war, as in most mortals, but are brought into energetic unity: he is both god and lion, both loveable and fearful” (6). Moments after meeting Lucy, Susan, and Peter, Aslan hugs them. “I feel so much less unnerved now,” Lucy claims (Tasca 47). Their close and personal encounter with Aslan allows for both fear and relief.

In many productions of *Narnia*, the actor playing Aslan also plays Professor Kirke and Father Christmas. This multiple layering of roles serves more than casting convenience. Rather, the three characters mythically connect to one another, much like Frank Morgan’s multiple roles relate to one another in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. This reinforces the Wiccan perspective of multifaceted Deity and simultaneous myth. Magliocco discusses how Witches have an “ability to hold mutually conflicting views simultaneously. The stories are not perceived as competing against one another, or as mutually exclusive expressions of truth, but as complementary metaphors...” (107). These three male roles in *Narnia* complement each other

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<sup>72</sup> The only play I’ve ever walked out of at intermission was a community theatre production of Robinette’s *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* where Aslan was portrayed comically in a gold-sequined vest and bow tie. I found the portrayal quite ridiculous, and it spoiled the play for me.

as Deity images. In his small but pivotal role, Professor Kirke opens the possibility of inner exploration in the song “Windows and Doors.” While ostensibly singing about the house, he claims “For if you are open inside, then doors and windows will stop you no more...” (8). This nicely foreshadows Aslan’s message of immanence in “From the Inside Out.” Professor Kirke later validates the children’s experiences, indicating he once traveled to Narnia himself (82). The older, wise man (or sage) in England gives a nice balance to the Narnian Deity images. Father Christmas brings gifts to the children and heralds the end of the White Witch’s winter. He explains, “I felt it when I got up this morning and my whole body tingled with warmth and love and a magnanimous feeling of good fellowship. Oh, you know the unmistakable feeling of Christmas morning, when you want to hug everybody” (37). This resonates with a Wiccan visceral understanding of the passage of time and precedence of personal experience. While Father Christmas is typically interpreted as a secular “Santa Claus,” Lewis’s Father Christmas recalls Wiccan myths of the “Holly King,” the Wiccan Lord of the dark half of the year, who at the winter solstice gives way to the incoming “Oak King,” the growing light of the new year. The Holly King and Oak King are two of the most well-known Wiccan God images,<sup>73</sup> and the Holly King in *Narnia*, Father Christmas, heralds the way for Aslan, the Oak King who rules over the light half of the year. Yet, the Holly King cannot come until “Aslan is on the move,” allowing for a change of seasons. The arrival of Father Christmas heralds the changes that allow the advent of spring, much like the sun’s transition at the Winter Solstice allows for the light half of the year.

From a panentheistic perspective, divinity exists within all things, but it is through the initiation or connection to something or someone greater (God) that a person can recognize his or her own divinity. Throughout all *The Chronicles of Narnia*, Aslan empowers other characters

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<sup>73</sup> Practitioners Janet and Stewart Farrar discuss the legend in their book *The Witches’ God* in the chapter “Oak King and Holly King” (35-38).

because “the Narnians and the humans who enter Narnia are supposed to gradually come to be able to do things for themselves, to themselves act as Aslan’s agents” claims literary scholar Devin Brown (186). From the Wiccan perspective, this empowerment establishes innate divinity in those previously disempowered. In the musical *Narnia*, Aslan allows Peter to fight and kill a wolf to prove himself. After this, Aslan declares, “My son, you have been tested and have passed” (50). He then knights Peter and names him “Sir Peter, the Defender” (50). Aslan supports this initiatory act for Peter and honors a change in him. Peter’s trial reveals his immanent Deity, his own true nature as the prophesied High King of Narnia.

The second brother, Edmund, undergoes a much deeper trial and testing through his betrayal of his family. The musical portrays him as slightly more petulant and less repentant than he is in the book, even continuing to lie and make excuses after he is rescued from the White Witch. Yet, Edmund’s innate divinity is revealed by Aslan in the song “From the Inside Out.” In the book and other adaptations, the conversation between Aslan and Edmund after his rescue is purposefully kept private. In the musical, when Edmund asks for a way to change, Aslan replies in the song, “Not from word or outward deed... From the inside out – there the answer lies.... So you must search within, and you must delve your deepest heart” (58). This powerful song encourages Edmund to find his answers within, listening to his own immanent divinity. For a Wiccan, this recalls the well-known Wiccan liturgical text of the “Charge of the Goddess,” which gives similar advice: “And you who seek to know Me, know that your seeking and yearning will avail you not unless you know the Mystery: for if that which you seek, you find not within yourself, you will never find it without” (Starhawk 91). The true mystery of Wicca is this recognition of innate divinity. Rather than encouraging revelation through a book or teacher, Aslan directs Edmund to the personal experience of his inner self. While not explicit, through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens I read this as Edmund’s innate divinity.

Edmund's character continues to transform dramatically through the rest of the musical with a couple of key plot points that vary greatly from the original book. Though spared from seeing Aslan's death in the book, in *Narnia* Edmund experiences the direct result of his betrayal, Aslan's sacrifice, first-hand (69). Not only is this a more dramatic portrayal, but the personal revelation helps Edmund continue his transformation. In the book Edmund does not receive a gift from Father Christmas, but in the musical he is given the "Mace of Loyalty," a tool that Edmund later uses to destroy the wand of the White Witch (76). This symbol of authority fits with the other gifts and empowers Edmund, indicating that he has within him the power to overcome his own inner trials. After he destroys the White Witch's wand, Aslan declares, "Edmund, you have proven yourself," (77) reminiscent of his previous declaration of Peter's success. Edmund has fully transformed.

The song "From the Inside Out" also uses natural imagery to reinforce the message of transformation: "How else could a tree bear fruit or a flower grow?... you can plant new seeds and growth can start" (58). This connection of Aslan to vegetation and the natural world would reinforce divine symbolism to a Wiccan. Aslan represents the new growth of the earth itself. "He is, in some ways, a vegetation god in addition to all else; where He stands, there is abounding life, not just of the spirit but also of the very earth with its teeming manifestations of vitality" describes literary critic Chad Walsh (11). The Wiccan spectator would especially notice Aslan's similarity to vegetation gods. As Wiccan practitioners Janet and Stewart Farrar explain, "The vegetation god is the full flowering of the son/lover god... as the lover of Mother Earth, he is the Sun and the rain which fertilize her; and as her son, he is the crops to which she gives birth as a result. The cycle is endless" (*Witches' God* 21). While Aslan is generally not pictured as a sexual image, he brings forth the fertility of the land throughout the entire musical. For example, the Beavers and children sing "All of These" long before Aslan's arrival, calling him

“the waiting seed that sleeps beneath the snow” (25). While the seasonal imagery in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* will be explored later in this chapter, Aslan’s direct connection to the flowering of the earth and the coming of springtime and his connection to the harvest through willing sacrifice are significant aspects of his godhood.

The final male Deity image in the musical dances onstage in the form of the White Stag, a role significantly increased in the musical from that in the book. While in the book the White Stag never actually appears, the script for the musical suggests that “the most magical of Narnian creatures” be used for transformational scene changes. “He is *not* an ordinary Narnian and should generally appear alone onstage or around the fringes of a scene. He is elusive and should not be overused” suggests Tasca in the production notes (84). The stag specifically should be used to visually transform winter into spring. “In a dance, he may thread vines and greenery through the scene, whisk snow off rocks, and make flowers bloom up from the ground” (84). When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, this character recalls the image of the Wiccan Horned God (who is related to the vegetation God). The Wiccan Farrars call him “the Horned God of Nature” and claim this god image “predates agriculture by countless thousands of years” (32). The “White Stag” originally derives from Celtic and Arthurian mythologies, both of which are favorites of modern Witches.<sup>74</sup> The White Stag’s Arthurian origins further links him to the lion Aslan, whom Lewis purposefully gave characteristics of the Holy Grail according to literary critic Margaret Hannay (8). This is no ordinary lion, but rather a representation of healing and abundance, just as this is no ordinary stag. The Holy Grail restores life to the land, just as Aslan and the White Stag restore life to Narnia.

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<sup>74</sup> See folklorists John and Caitlyn Matthews *Hallowquest* for more details about the myth of the White Stag in Arthurian myth (4-50). Sarah Pike discusses briefly how Arthurian myth fits well with the “romantic medievalism” common in Neo-Paganism (171).

The female Deity images in *Narnia* are much more complicated. In the reverse of Oz (where the women held all the power and the men were portrayed as flawed and ineffectual), the female children Lucy and Susan are portrayed weaker than Peter and Edmund, and the White Witch and her England counterpart, the housekeeper Mrs. Macready, are presented as the primary antagonists. Yet, much like the reclamation of the Wicked Witch of the West, even the White Witch of Narnia can be explored as a Wiccan Deity image. The White Witch is described in the stage directions as “a coldly beautiful, pale-complexioned woman, dressed in white and wearing a crown” (12). Lewis designed the character to be beautiful to contrast her “evil” nature, suggesting that evil often appears in disguise. Literary critic Kath Filmer claims, “Because the Witch is white, not black, the usual color for the wicked witch of fairy tales, her deceit begins from the moment of her first appearance” (109). In the song “Turkish Delight,” she offers Edmund bewitched food and drink which she calls both “ambrosia” (14) and “forbidden fruit” (15). Edmund reinforces the sensuality of this scene with his response to eating the candy, “Sweeter than the sweetest honey, creamier than cream, takes my senses to a dizzy height” (16). The sensuality of the White Witch’s temptation reinforces Lewis’s fear of female temptation. Phenomenologist David Holbrook compares her temptation to the Freudian “bad breast”: “There is symbolism of intense oral hunger behind the fantasies, and here the liquid offered by the Witch seems like (magic) breast-milk (‘very sweet and foamy and creamy’)” (41). Rather than nourishing life, this “bad breast” leads only to suffering and death. Beautiful and attractive, the White Witch tempts Edmund into betrayal of his family and steals his power. She is the natural antagonist to Aslan’s empowerment.

In the production notes, Tasca suggests the character “will work best if she is believable in her evil” (85). Though it might be tempting to play her as a caricature, Tasca urges directors and actors to remember “she is a queen (albeit self-appointed), very conscious of her dignity,



and the embodiment of selfishness and cruelty” (85). The White Witch intimidates, terrorizes, and paralyzes. She represents the supernatural “magic” of humanity, grasping for power while trying to reduce the meaning and substance of life. “She can only reduce things – Narnia to stasis, the rational creatures of Narnia to stone, Aslan to a shorn cat” explains literary critic Manlove (6). Everything is reduced to its smallest possible form, unchanging and limited, the antithesis of growth or change. “Turning people to stone is the White Witch’s forte, and stone, like ice, is a state of being frozen” explains literary critic Nancy-Lou Patterson (4). Before the entrance of the children and Aslan, all of Narnia is stopped in time due to the witch’s grasping of power. She despises her loss of control and insists that no one speak Aslan’s name. Brown agrees, “In her attempt to prohibit anyone speaking about Aslan, the Witch continues her pattern of dominance and her pattern of seeking to make things seem like what they are not” (164). Her reaction to the name of Aslan shows her fear and instability for which she overcompensates by attempting to “fix” all things around her. Tellingly, in the musical both the White Witch and her England persona, the housekeeper Mrs. Macready, are both introduced by yelling “Stop!” (Tasca 9 and 12). Mrs. Macready keeps the house as a museum, frozen in time, and discourages exploration (9). The White Witch entices Edmund by describing his future as a king: “And nothing could grow or breathe or move in the whole kingdom unless ‘King Edmund’ so willed it” (16). Of course, she has no intention of giving her kingdom to Edmund, keeping it frozen for herself. Yet, as her frozen spell begins to deteriorate, she loses her “cool.” The song “Hot and Bothered” reveals how she truly lacks control (30). From a Wiccan perspective, the White Witch’s frozen state of being serves as a warning of what might happen if one does not allow for change and movement in life and how a person grasping for selfish control will ultimately lose it.

Alternatively, through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the White Witch could be revisioned as a dark Goddess. Filmer claims, "She is a clear instance of devilry being identified as female" (110). Thus, she fits within the lineage of the witches of pre-Christian Europe, the same witches that Wiccans claim as part of their own lineage. Filmer also describes her as "an example of the 'Great Goddess' figure... Her enjoyment of spilling blood and of killing links her clearly with the devouring goddess image, the negative and fearful aspects of femininity..." (110). The musical *Narnia* reinforces this interpretation of the White Witch by having the Cruelies chant "Mother of Darkness" during Aslan's sacrifice (66). Literary critic Cathy McSporran's article "Daughters of Lilith: Witches and Wicked Women in *The Chronicles of Narnia*" demonstrates how in Narnia "wickedness is conflated with rebellion against the principle of 'natural' authority, particularly masculine authority" (192). She argues "villainous females tend to be depicted as monstrous and unnatural, and as such are to be killed as swiftly as possible" (192). Just as the witches of the Renaissance and of folklore were destroyed physically, in the musical Aslan kills the White Witch off-stage and returns announcing "The Witch is no more. Let her castle be her tomb" (77). The White Witch brings winter, while Aslan brings summer. Both are important. As Wiccan practitioners Janet and Stewart Farrar explain, "Life is a process, not a state. The Goddess is both the womb and the tomb...The devouring Dark Mother is not evil; she is our friend, if we are not to stagnate and thus truly die" (*The Witches' Goddess* 19). By recognizing and honoring the White Witch's role as a dark Goddess, the cycle of life and death can continue. Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the Wiccan spectator would privilege the dark Goddess image over mainstream interpretations.

In the prophecy of Cair Paravel, the four thrones must be filled by two boys and two girls. The "Daughters of Eve" bring balance of male and female, even if the female characters are less proactive and heroic than the male characters. In the original book, Lewis presents the

youngest child Lucy as an incredibly sympathetic character. Filmer calls her an “Earth Mother” (105) as “Lucy’s virtue is emphasized at every opportunity... she is a healer, receiving healing unguent from Father Christmas”(106). In the musical Lucy is slightly less sympathetic, bickering with Edmund and claiming she “hates” him even after Aslan has welcomed him back (Tasca 60). Their relationship only improves when fully threatened with death by the White Witch’s army, and then Lucy declares, “If this is the end of us, Edmund, I just want you to know I don’t hate you anymore... Not that much, anyway” (72). By giving Lucy flaws, the musical allows her to heal and transform herself as well as others. The second sister, Susan, is one of the most controversial of Lewis’s female characters, for in the final book in the series she rejects Narnia and Aslan as she “chooses the shadow rather than the reality” (Filmer 106). While this information is not known in the first book or adaptations like *Narnia*, some of her skepticism shows through her attitude. She asks Aslan to “find four others” to fulfill the prophecy (Tasca 49) and after Edmund is rescued declares “I don’t care about the Prophecy! And I hate the war! *I want to go home!*” (56). She distresses about the violence of battle several times, but ultimately she uses the bow and arrows given to her by Father Christmas in the battle claiming a righteous indignation: “There really isn’t any choice when there’s something lurking out there so evil, is there?” (72). When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, Susan’s bow and arrow recall Amazonian warriors and Artemis, Goddess of the Hunt, but Susan lacks the self-assurance of these mythical women. In the heat of the battle she still lacks faith, declaring “All these swords and bows and arrows and battle plans and maps – all add up to nothing... I bet this stupid horn doesn’t work either” (73). With this she blows the horn Father Christmas gave her to use in a time of great need and Aslan appears with a rush of wind, resurrected from the dead. She acts despite her disbelief, and so Susan’s actions bring about the most powerful transformative act in the play. However, she finds her rescue from without

rather than from within, so she relies on the transcendent Deity Aslan rather than her own immanence.

Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, Deity images in resonate with a view of Deity as both immanent and transcendent, male and female. The male transcendent Aslan empowers others to find their own immanence. Wiccan God images of the Holly King, the Sage, the vegetation (sacrificial) god, and the Horned God are clearly represented. Wiccan Goddess images can be seen through the female White Witch as a much maligned dark Goddess, a warning of selfish grasping for power and control, as well as dark Mother. The other female characters bring out the image of Earth Mother and Warrior Goddess, though in very subtle ways. The male and female Deity images all reinforce the necessity of change and the importance of the cycles of nature. This leads to the third identity marker in relation to revelation of the sacred, the sanctity of nature.

### **Always Winter but Never Christmas: The Sanctity of Nature in *Narnia***

Perhaps the most significant liturgy for most Witches is the turning Wheel of the Year, eight celebrations spaced evenly through the continuous cycle of the seasons. While Witches recognize that their rituals are not “necessary” to allow the seasons to change, most feel an urge to connect to the changes as they happen and feel a lack when rituals are not done or the change of seasons are not recognized. Witches recognize the natural world as a source of sacred revelation, comparing the cycle of the seasons to cycles of life. In *Narnia*, this cycle of seasons has been interrupted by the White Witch, causing “always winter - and never Christmas. And never spring, either” (18). Mr. Tumnus reminisces about “a time when all the creatures of Narnia loved one another and danced gaily beneath a golden sun” (18). He then sings of a neverending springtime in the song “You Can’t Imagine” (18). Rather than seeking such eternal springtime, Witches revel in the changes brought about through the entire cycle of life, death,

and rebirth. However, even after spring returns to Narnia, the mythic lion journeys through death and rebirth, clearly representing the solar Wheel of the Year. Viewing the musical *Narnia* through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the plot follows the eight holidays of the Wheel of the Year.

The Wiccan Wheel of the Year both ends and begins at Samhain (October 31).<sup>75</sup> Often called the “Witch’s New Year,” this holiday heralds the coming of the winter season and the darkest time of the year. According to Wiccans Teresa Moorey and Jane Brideson, “Observing the spirit of Samhain is part of giving due honour to the Dark Mother” (30). The darkness must be recognized before one can truly honor the light. “From darkness comes forth light, from the bare and barren earth, new life quickens, in due course” (25). In *Narnia*, the darkness of winter characterizes the White Witch’s reign as parallel to the darkness of World War II the children face in England. Though the war is only briefly mentioned in this play, it provides the backdrop of darkness before the children journey through the wardrobe.

Changes in Narnia begin with the arrival of Lucy, whose name means “light.” In Adrian Mitchell’s stage adaptation *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* (1998), Professor Kirke recognizes the meaning of Lucy’s name by calling her “child of light” (15). This phrase, “child of light,” is often used by Wiccans to describe the returning of the light at the Winter Solstice through the birth of a divine child, most often male though sometimes female. “At this moment of intense importance, Light is reborn” (Moorey and Brideson 42). The slightest increase of light after the winter solstice brings cause for celebration at the darkest time of the year. This holiday, called Yule by most Wiccans and celebrated between December 21-23, honors the coming of the light. After the darkness of winter, the Sun is reborn and the days begin to lengthen again. In *Narnia*, change takes over throughout the environment, thawing the White

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<sup>75</sup> All of the dates referred to in the Wiccan Wheel of the Year are approximate and are celebrated by most Witches within a few days of the dates listed.

Witch's spell. Winter must recede. From the mention of Aslan's name, the audience is led into the heralding of the spring. The audience sees these signs long before we actually meet the character himself, just as the Wiccan recognizes the signs of spring long before the actual thaw. The visit of Father Christmas,<sup>76</sup> the winter king, signifies the Holly King of Yule who prepares the way for the Oak King, the great Lion, a symbol of summer.

Six weeks later, at the sabbat of Imbolc (February 2), Wiccans celebrate a time of cleansing and closeness, interior, and shielded from the cold. This holiday heralds the coming of Spring. "[In] the 'belly' of the earth life stirs. We feel this within ourselves, as a small thrill of excitement as light grows" (Moorey and Brideson 57). In *Narnia*, as the snow melts, Edmund sees "crocuses," an early spring flower (41). Spring returns very quickly as the White Stag dances, accompanied by "sweet, breezy music" (41). Watching the accelerated transition of the season is reminiscent of watching a flower bloom through time-lapse photography, as the acceleration turns the ordinary into something extraordinary. Viewing this through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the change of the seasons can be considered magical.

The cycle of the Witch's year continues with the spring holidays of the Spring Equinox, called Ostara (March 21-23), and Beltane (May 1). These holidays both are joyful celebrations of spring, youthful awakening, and ripening. Often described as "fertility festivals," these holidays honor the symbolic union of the Lord and Lady, along with the very real physical union of animals and plants that allow life on Earth to thrive. Lewis himself recognized the mythic power of fertility images in *The Discarded Image*:

All earth, contrasted with all the sky, can be, indeed must be, intuited as a unity. The marriage relation between Father Sky (or Dyaus) and Mother Earth forces itself on the imagination. He is on top, she lies under him. He does things to her (shines and, more important, rains upon her, into her): out of her, in response, come forth the crops – just as calves come out of cows or babies out of wives. In a word, he begets, she bears. (37)

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<sup>76</sup> Moorey and Brideson connect the classic character of Father Christmas to another Wiccan god image, the Horned God, because of his reindeer (43), though in the musical he arrives on foot.

Lewis intended his *Chronicles of Narnia* for children, so the fertility images are subtle, but they are present nonetheless. In the musical, Mr. and Mrs. Beaver sing a bawdy song, "Wot a Bit A' Spring Can Do," playing with these fertility images. This is not unexpected, as association of beavers with sexuality appears throughout folklore, and the word "beaver" has been used as slang for both male and female sex organs. In this song, the Beavers sing about how "each limb can swell in size as the sap begins t' rise till it almost seems bound t' burst in two" (42). The association of fertility with spring continues with "Ev'ry he-male's havin fits... ev'ry female knows that it's amazin' when a blaze a' bloom breaks thru" (43) as "ev'ry creature feels the surge. Mother Nature's on a splurge" (44). This fun and upbeat song praises the sensuality and sexuality of spring, encouraging the "mystery" and "wonder" of physical passion. Through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the sexual representation of springtime in *Narnia* resonates with the Wiccan sanctification of sexuality and its connection to the season.

At the height of the summer sun, Litha, the Summer Solstice (June 20-22), Witches recognize the start of the waning or dark half of the year. "As the longest day arrives and light is at the very peak of its power, so from that moment darkness begins to grow" (Moorey and Brideson 100). In *Narnia*, Edmund's encounter with Aslan through the song "From the Inside Out" can be recognized as this triumphant moment. When Aslan tells Edmund to look into his eyes, Edmund replies, "I can't! It's like looking into the sun!" (57). By looking into the lion's eyes, Edmund is able to see his faults and begin his personal transformation. However, the dark returns in the midst of the greatest light, as the White Witch sends her emissary and insists on Edmund's death (61). When viewed with the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, this foreshadows the darkness yet to come and prepares for the impending harvest.

The Wiccan spectator recognizes Aslan's willing sacrifice as a fundamental part of the cycle of the seasons. The symbolic image of sacrifice represents the dark half of the year and

personally reminds Wiccans of the parts of their life that must be sacrificed in order to allow for growth and change. Every harvest represents the sacrifice of plants and animals for food, the cycle of death and rebirth seen throughout nature. The first of three harvest festivals, Lughnasa (August 2), signals the God's preparation for sacrifice. In *Narnia*, Aslan prepares Peter for the upcoming battle, stating "I cannot promise I will be with you. You four should be able to carry on" (65). This leads us to the divine sacrifice, honored by Wiccans at the autumn equinox, Mabon (September 20-22). Aslan's sacrifice includes many powerful images for Witches, though they are used in a drastically different context than Witches use them. The White Witch's minions lay him upon a stone table, which has been compared to Stonehenge,<sup>77</sup> a place that is considered sacred to many Wiccans.<sup>78</sup> The White Witch kills Aslan with an ancient magical knife reminiscent of the athame, the Witches' magical knife (though athames are never used to cut on the physical plane).<sup>79</sup>

In the Wiccan Wheel of the Year, during the darkness of Samhain, the God journeys to the underworld and overcomes death. In *Narnia*, Aslan physically returns from death to life to conquer the White Witch's army. In his song, "Catch Me If You Can," the lion describes his journey "across the span" as he "roars mightily... glowing, dazzlingly bright. Filling All of Narnia with Light!" (74). A Witch recognizes rebirth as the completion of the cycle, the coming again of the light at Yule. The rebirth of Aslan can be fully anticipated as part of the seasonal cycle. Aslan calls this the "Deeper Magic... when someone innocent sacrifices himself for one who is guilty, then death moves in reverse and brings the innocent victim back through the

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<sup>77</sup> Lewis scholar Kathryn Lindskoog speculates, "The stone that is lowest at Stonehenge is called the stone of sacrifice because people suspect that humans were bound and stabbed there in evil ceremonies thousands of years ago... When death was defeated and Aslan came back to life, the stone table was split down the middle. The symbol of death turned into a symbol of new life" (104).

<sup>78</sup> See Scott Cunningham (109) and Starhawk (18).

<sup>79</sup> "The magic knife (or athame) has an ancient history. It isn't used for cutting purposes in Wicca, but to direct the energy raised during rites and spells.... The knife is often dull, usually double-edged with a black or dark handle" (Cunningham 30).



door of life" (73). This rebirth is not limited to a single "savior" but to anyone understanding the Deeper Magic and willing to offer self-sacrifice. In rituals Wiccans often are called upon to offer symbolic self-sacrifice, not of their lives but of their fears and hopes. "For us the message is that something has to give way to make room for something else... anything good, wonderful, fantastic that comes to pass requires sacrifice, even if this is only the sacrifice of the dream we had of it, before it materialized" (Moorey and Brideson 116). All change requires sacrifice. By recognizing Deeper Magic, the Wiccan spectator metaphorically finds rebirth.

As noted by Peter Schakel, Lewis uses archetypal cyclical images throughout all the books in the Chronicles: "The seasonal cycle is used, for example, in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*... the daily cycle of the sun becomes an important element in *The Horse And His Boy*... Even Narnia comes full circle, from its origin in *The Magician's Nephew* to its ending – and continuation in another world – in *The Last Battle*." (*Reading with the Heart* 708). The seasonal cycle shows quite clearly in the musical *Narnia*, as the audience journeys from the darkness of winter through the spring thaw, spring fertility, height of summer, sacrifice of the harvest, and return to rebirth. I offer my Wiccan reading of them as representations of the sanctity of nature, a continuous revelation of the sacred through personal experience of the natural world.

### ***The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe in Film***

While several attempts have been made to adapt *The Chronicles of Narnia* to stage and screen, Walden Media produced the first full-scale film adaptation of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* in 2005. Directed by Andrew Adamson with screenplay by Adamson, Ann Peacock, Christopher Markus, and Stephen McFeely, the film stays very close to the plotline and details of the original book, though the screenwriters enhanced the dramatic tension, characterization, and elements of danger throughout. Most of the characterization and major plot points are quite similar to those I've already analyzed in the musical *Narnia*, though

without the musical numbers that so clearly illuminated immanent divinity and the Wiccan Wheel of the Year. To a greater extent than the musical, the cinematic version offers a visual realization of Narnia's syncretic myth, images of Deity, and sanctity of nature. The film has the advantage of being more available to a broad audience, and in addition to the book, this is the primary way Wiccans have engaged with this story. In this section, I will discuss the visual choices made by filmmakers and their significance in my Wiccan reading.

### **Living Myths: Bringing Narnian Creatures to the Screen**

This film adaptation uses photorealistic special effects by three different special effects companies. The WETA Workshop, best known for Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films, worked on backgrounds and miscellaneous characters. Industrial Light & Magic, best known for *Star Wars*, created Mr. and Mrs. Beaver and Mr. Tumnus. Rhythm and Hues created the character of Aslan. In the DVD production commentary, director Andrew Adamson claims, "Nearly every shot was an effects shot." He marveled at how many different visual effects companies worked together on some scenes. It was the first time that these competitors worked together on this level, and he considered their success to be indicative of what makes the movie "work." This combination of different types and styles of special effects reflected C.S. Lewis's eclectic style, allowing for very different types of designs to exist in the same fantasy space. Richard Taylor, the movie's creature design supervisor, explained that his WETA Workshop created 10 types of creatures for *Lord of the Rings* but 68 for Narnia (Lovgren). "Things as diverse as porcelain from the Grecian era, mosaics, bronze castings, marble carvings, sculptures, illustrative paintings—all of these influences we used to source and find the most appropriate mythological representation of a particular character or culture in Narnia," explains Taylor (Lovgren).

This eclecticism of design reinforces Lewis's use of multiple sources, allowing the Wiccan spectator to visually see the mixing of mythologies on the screen. Centaurs and phoenixes, mermaids and minotaurs all come to life in a more realistic way than has ever been possible before. "The sense of strangeness and wonder such readers experience as they read the *Chronicles* derives precisely from the magical reality they experience as they find in that world figures they know to be only mythical in our world," describes Peter Schakel, a literary critic who specializes in *Narnia*. He continues, "That magical effect is heightened, not diminished, by the mixing of figures from different traditions" (Lovgren). When this mixture of magical creatures appears in scenes like Aslan's camp, the sacrifice, and the final battle, the effect reinforces the Wiccan identity marker of mythic eclecticism and a magical worldview.

#### **Father Sun, Mother Moon: Wiccan Deity in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe***

In stage adaptations, the character of Aslan could easily seem a bit silly, as he is usually played by a man in a lion suit. The live action BBC film (1988) used an animatronic puppet, but it barely moved its mouth when talking and therefore could never be considered a realistic character. In the DVD commentary, Adamson explains how important it was to him to create a photorealistic lion "with real screen presence, power, and warmth" who could still interact with the live actors. He spent a year and a half working with Rhythm and Hues in development of this single character. Using a combination of animation and animatronics, they created a lion whose presence certainly fills the screen.

The scriptwriters also successfully built a tension about Aslan into a slow reveal through the script. The first reference to Aslan comes through an image of a lion roaring in the fire<sup>80</sup> at Mr. Tumnus's house during Lucy's first trip into Narnia, an image that clearly affects Tumnus but does not offer any explanation of the lion's significance at this early point in the film. When

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<sup>80</sup> Incidentally, the practice of seeing images in firelight is a common technique of divination used by Wiccans.

Mr. Beaver first mentions the name of "Aslan," the camera pans the faces of the Pevensie children in what Adamson calls the "Aslan sweep." This camera move allows the audience to see each individual child's reaction to the name. When Adamson asked the child actors in the DVD actors' commentary what they were thinking during this scene, William Mosely, the actor playing Peter, said he remembered a very powerful feeling but he could not really describe it. The anticipation of Aslan truly begins with this scene, though Mr. Beaver does not reveal that Aslan is a lion (as he does in the same scene in the book). The foreshadowing continues when a Fox describes Aslan as being "like everything you've ever heard" to Mr. Beaver. By the time the children reach Aslan's camp, the anticipation for this character is built to a great height.

Once revealed, Aslan quickly becomes real, a character the audience can "sympathize and empathize with" according to Adamson. The animation allows for humor, sadness, anger, and love to show in the characterization of the lion. His roars and physicality give the necessary presence, but his face shows sentience. It was important to Adamson that the audience sense a vulnerability in Aslan. In an early scene, Aslan makes a slight joke which Adamson says he added to make him more likeable. He also tells Peter of "a deep magic more powerful than any of us that rules over all of Narnia. It defines right from wrong and governs our destinies, yours and mine" (Adamson et al). In this scene Aslan is presented as a non-omniscient God ruled by the same cosmic law that governs all creation, not separate from the creation. He later says, "I, too, want my family safe," speaking of the Narnian creatures as his family rather than his subjects. To a Wiccan spectator, this reinforces the idea of Aslan as an immanent, incarnate, and embodied Deity rather than a transcendent, distant God.

Aslan's vulnerability becomes most clear with the scene leading up to his sacrifice when Lucy reaches out to touch Aslan. Adamson explains how important this image was in his concept: "A little girl touching what looks like a real lion and all of the awe and fear associated

with lions... the fact that you want to approach them but you know they could bite your head off. That's just taken for granted as this little girl reaches out to comfort this amazingly powerful creature." This image shows a ferocious and dangerous creature as approachable and vulnerable. To the Wiccan spectator, this scene reinforces the paradox between transcendence and immanence of the divine. A scene between Mr. Tumnus and Lucy after the coronation continues the exploration of Aslan as a paradox. Tumnus says, "After all, he's not a tame lion," and Lucy responds, "No, but he's good." While this dialogue was moved from its earlier placement in the book, the idea of a lion who is "not tame" but is "good" resonates with Wiccan views of Deity as powerful and transformative. Lewis originally chose the name "Aslan" because it is a Turkish word for "lion" (Brown 108). I find it interesting that the language is Turkish, for this makes Aslan a type of "real" Turkish delight, filling the children's needs rather than enchanting them.

When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the photorealistic lion transcends into myth, reinforced by aural and visual cues. The character is voiced by Liam Neeson who provides resonance, warmth, and ferocity to the characterization. Adamson calls it "a voice which allows you to like Aslan in a very short time." Visually, Aslan's body is a warm, tawny color, reinforced by the warmth of colors in his camp, yellows, oranges, and reds. He is lit from behind for two pivotal scenes, the one where he speaks privately to Edmund and then in his first appearance after his resurrection. Both of these scenes take place on the edge of a cliff, allowing the sky to fill the background. Aslan's significant appearances are heralded by a rush of wind, including the first time the children meet him and again for the resurrection. In this latter scene, the children (and viewer) move away from the dead Aslan, hear the wind howl and a rumbling as the table breaks, and then see the sun break through clouds behind the restored lion. In the final image of the film, the wardrobe door opens just a crack shining with a light

and the lion roars. The Wiccan spectator sees the lion's power manifests through wind and sun, two powerful male Deity symbols within Wicca.<sup>81</sup>

While Aslan personifies wind and sun, the masculine elements, the White Witch personifies earth and water, the feminine elements. Played by Tilda Swinton, the White Witch also reveals her character more slowly than in the book. In her first scene with Edmund, she speaks in gentle tones, only showing her inconsistency by yelling once. Adamson explains their approach, as he believes "inconsistency and emotional unavailability are the scariest to kids." Swinton's White Witch truly personifies ice in her first scene, in a fully white, rigid costume with white furs, a tall crown of ice, extremely pale makeup. Her fair hair is pulled into a complicated snake-like design of dreadlocks, hinting at her connection to the mythic gorgon Medusa who could turn creatures to stone with a single stare. Embodying the horizontal feminine,<sup>82</sup> she moves horizontally on her sledge through low spaces. Her attempts at vertical (masculine) symbols of achievement, her towering ice castle and ice crown, ultimately melt. To the Wiccan spectator, the White Witch personifies a dark Goddess by her connection to stone (earth) and ice (water).

Through the course of the film, the White Witch's costuming changes in color and slightly in shape. Adamson explains, "Her dress is like a mood ring, changing color as her power wanes. It started large and white and [by the sacrifice scene] has shifted to dark and thin." To a Wiccan, this costume could represent the moon, which also shifts in shape, color, and size over time. This visually connects her to the Wiccan Goddess of the Moon.<sup>83</sup> He also chose to give Swinton fully dark contacts during the sacrifice scene to reflect how animal predators' pupils dilate at the climax of a hunt. These visual reflections of the White Witch's

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<sup>81</sup> See *The Witches' God* for descriptions of "The Sun God" (Farrars 15-17) and Scott Cunningham for descriptions of the "Sky Father" (13).

<sup>82</sup> See my analysis of vertical vs. horizontal imagery in my Oz chapter.

<sup>83</sup> See the Farrars' chapter on "The Moon Goddess" (38-44) in their book *The Witches' Goddess*.

emotional state can be interpreted by Witches as the intuitive power usually ascribed to women and to the lunar cycles.

In the battle, the White Witch wears Aslan's mane and a golden crown, and for the first time in the film she wears dark eye makeup. According to Adamson, she is "trying to take on the mantle of leadership." From a Wiccan perspective, her wearing of the lion's mane could be seen as both contagious and homeopathic magic, using the actual fur of the lion to try to claim his power and also attempting to look "like" a lion.<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, when Aslan kills the White Witch, the two share a moment of recognition. Adamson wanted it to be seen as both characters "acceptance of fate," that one must conquer the other, but I see this moment as a communion between the light and dark, male and female, and all of the elements, as he personifies fire and wind while she personifies water and earth. In this one moment, all distinctions between these polarities fade away.

While the polarity between the lion and the witch illustrate the most obvious Deity images in this film, through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens I see a final image of Deity in the final word of the title: the wardrobe. In this film adaptation, the wardrobe is given visual prominence, with every line in the set intentionally designed to draw the eye to the wardrobe, covered with a veil. The sound effect of a rush of wind (later associated with Aslan) accompanies its reveal. The wardrobe is carved with designs of a tree, intentionally referencing *The Magician's Nephew*, a book that tells about the creation of Narnia. In this book Digory Kirke (who later becomes the Professor in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*) brings back an apple from the brand-new land of Narnia in order to save his mother's life. He plants the apple core and eventually makes the wardrobe from the wood of the tree that grows from the core. David Holbrook theorizes that the tree and the wardrobe itself symbolize "the mother's body" based

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<sup>84</sup> Sabina Magliocco explains how modern Witches use these concepts first identified by James Frazer's studies of various types of magic (118).

on C.S. Lewis's own childhood loss of his mother. As he explains, "The magic-of-going-through-the wardrobe, which is the essence of the Narnia fantasies, originated in an impulse to restore the mother to life... *restoring the mother's body*, which is itself the Tree of Life made into a wardrobe" (18). By choosing a carving of the tree of life for the door of the wardrobe in the film, Adamson reinforces the symbolism of the wardrobe as the body of the mother.

Holbrook continues, "In going through the wardrobe the children are going through the mother's body as through the birth passage into another world, where the dead mother is to be found. She is there, in that world, and she has blighted it" (28). The dead mother (characterized by the White Witch) has "rejected the child by dying" (28). The Pevensie children's mother is characterized more strongly in this film than in any other Narnia adaptation. We actually meet the mother as a character in the first several scenes and Lucy calls her by name. The name used, Helen, is the name of the real-life mother of Georgie Henley, the actress playing Lucy. This is one of the many times Adamson created a connection between the fiction world and the reality of the actors. Another instance was when he instructed Anna Popplewell, the actress playing Susan, to use the reality of her mother leaving the film set to show her emotional vulnerability when the children leave their mother in the film (Adamson). The Wiccan spectator reads this prevalent theme of the search for the mother as similar to their own search for the Goddess. Like the magic of the wardrobe, the "Charge of the Goddess" states that she can only be found within, not without. The final scene between Lucy and the Professor reinforces this idea. She asks if they will ever go back to Narnia, and he responds, "I expect so. It will probably happen when you're not looking for it. All the same, best to keep your eyes open" (Adamson et al). The hidden Goddess appears when Wiccans least expect it, sometimes appearing ferocious and terrifying. By journeying through the wardrobe, they are able to face their deepest fears and triumph over them.



## **An Explosion of Color: The Sanctity of Nature**

The Wiccan identity marker of revelation through the sanctity of nature can be recognized in several ways in the 2005 film *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*. As it follows the same basic plotline as the book and all previous adaptations, the film correlates to the Wiccan Wheel of the Year, the mythic journey from frozen winter to the reawakening spring, leading to the sacrifice of harvest, the ensuing darkness, and the rebirth of the spring. Adamson chose a specific color scheme to show this transformation visually, beginning with muted colors in the first scenes in England, abruptly changing into the stark contrast of the frozen white Narnia, then with a “color explosion” with the arrival of spring (Adamson). He chose pink cherry tree blossoms as the first color, along with much green grass. The environmental effects team spent a significant amount of time seeding and grooming the grass in the New Zealand locations. Adamson explains that he wanted the transition from winter to spring to be reminiscent of the transition from black and white to color television. “You were contained in this color range long enough that when spring came it would feel like a relief with its explosion of color,” he explains on the DVD commentary. Yet, even with springtime he purposefully withheld golds and reds until the children arrived at Aslan’s camp, where the tents and flags all stood out with these bright solar colors. He speaks of this location as a “natural cathedral... just one of those magical places where you immediately started talking in hushed tones.” The beauty of the natural landscape and the choice of colors emphasized the sacred nature of Aslan. The color journey in the film is completed with a scene of the grown kings and queens hunting the White Stag through an autumn forest just before they return to England through the wardrobe. The bright orange and gold leaves visually show a completion of the seasonal cycle. Wiccans pay close attention to color significance and symbolism,

particularly in relation to the natural world. The Wiccan spectator could see the sanctity of nature through these specific color and location choices.

A sense of journey through time also shows through the characters of the Pevensie children in the film. Adamson chose to shoot this film almost entirely in chronological order to allow the children's natural maturation to work for the story. At the start, the children are disempowered in war-torn England. The characters grew older and more experienced while the actors trained for combat and spent more time outdoors. This allowed their physical transformation to feel genuine and realistic. They physically reflect the empowerment Narnia offers, an empowerment which comes to fruition with their coronation as Kings and Queens at Cair Paravel. The coronation further reinforces the sanctity of nature by linking the four Kings and Queens to the four cardinal directions and the four elements, symbols that modern Witches find incredibly significant. Aslan calls upon the "glistening Eastern Sea" to crown Lucy the Valiant, the "great Western Wood" to crown Edmund the Just, the "radiant Southern Sun" to crown Susan the Gentle, and "the clear Northern Sky" to crown Peter the Magnificent (Adamson et al). This connection of the elements and cardinal directions to Narnian landscape is subtle in the books, but clear in the film. Lucy and Susan are crowned with silver coronets, while Peter and Edmund are crowned with gold. These metals also reinforce symbolism for a Wiccan, as the Goddess is usually associated with silver and the God associated with gold. Aslan closes the coronation by stating, "Once a King or Queen in Narnia, always a king or queen. May your wisdom grace us until the stars rain down from the heavens" (Adamson et al). This blessing reflects the innate divinity of the children as kings and queens, as they fulfill of the prophecy. According to Holbrook, "In Freudian language kings and queens stand for mothers and fathers... The children, as we later find, are to become kings and queens. So, in one sense, the fairy story is a fable of gender identity, and fulfillment of one's role" (63). The

children who lack power, whose mother and father are taken away from them through war, become the embodiment of power as kings and queens. The sanctity of nature reaches beyond the earth into the universe full of stars. The Wiccan spectator recognizes this as the children reaching their divine potential, placed like the Father Sun and Mother Moon among the radiant stars.

The final manifestation of the sanctity of nature, the Wiccan connection to animals, shows more clearly in this film than in any other adaptation, as the photorealistic beavers, wolves, and other animals allow for a clearer relationship to develop between the people and the talking Animals. Adamson claims, "Though they are slightly anthropomorphized, these animals are first animals." Mr. and Mrs. Beaver do not wear clothes, do not walk upright, and really look and act like beavers. Many of the wolves in the film are real wolves, though they were so friendly and happy that they often were caught wagging their tails when they were supposed to be sinister and ferocious (so ILM had to replace their tails digitally). The fauns and centaurs were created through digital effects that allowed a seamless combination of man and beast. Mr. Tumnus, played by James McAvoy, wears no shirt (even in the snow) and has a light complexion and fur. Special effects allow his "goat" legs to look drastically different from human-shaped legs and for his body to move in an entirely non-human way. In the commentary, Adamson explains that McAvoy walked on his tiptoes to give a peculiar goat-like cadence to his walk. This attention to detail in creating the animal characters allows for them to seem more genuine and believable. Many Wiccans honor and value their relationship with animals, often claiming a special communication with them. The realistic characterization of Narnia's talking Animals in this film can be read by a Wiccan spectator as part of the sanctity of nature.

## The Magic of Narnia

Magic permeates the land of Narnia throughout all of the books and adaptations. Lewis uses the term to explain anything unexplainable: how the children can travel between worlds, the powers of Aslan and the witches, and even specific “spells” that are cast by both good and evil characters. Brotherton encourages readers to “think of magic as Lewis’s language for discussing spirituality” (339), while Peter Shakel claims Lewis “uses magic to give concrete embodiment to divine mysteries” (*Imagination* 176). Narnia allows an enchantment of the everyday, a magical worldview quite well-known to Wiccans. According to Devin Brown, “After reading this type of book, we do not despise our friends, our robins, or our wardrobes for being unmagical. These stories cast a spell over our world and make all robins and wardrobes a little marvelous, a little more wonderful than before” (16). While some Neo-Pagans and Witches have avoided or ignored the stories, others have fully accepted them for what they are: an intermingling of Pagan and Christian themes and images. In a blog review of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Neo-Pagan Justine Jordan wrote in December 2010, “Rather more pagan than its reputation, Narnia delivers many consolations for wintry existence.” She describes the seasonal delights, Deity imagery, and what she calls a “pagan, pantheistic realm of centaurs and giants, unicorns and satyrs, talking animals and living trees, Bacchus and Father Christmas.” In many ways, engaging in Narnia can bridge the gap between Witches and Christians, allowing them to share the modern myth. Hutton claims that in Narnia, C.S. Lewis “brought together a very rich and complex intermingling of Christian and pagan themes, characters, and motifs” (225). The eclectic mix of sources, specific Deity images, and the sanctity of nature can each be seen as identity markers through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens, and the performance of these Narnian images through ritual breathes life into the characters, much like Aslan breathes life into the statues in the Witch’s courtyard after a long winter.

## CHAPTER FOUR ALOHAMORA - WICCAN PRACTICES IN THE WIZARDING WORLD<sup>85</sup>

With her *Harry Potter* books, J.K. Rowling revitalized the folkloric witch into a new generation of young witches and wizards, complete with pointed hats, flying brooms, magic wands, and simmering cauldrons. In this incredibly well-known story, a young orphan named Harry leaves the home of his neglectful aunt and uncle to study magic at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft & Wizardry. Through the course of seven years (and seven books), Harry battles the evil Lord Voldemort in an epic coming-of-age tale. Many Witches see only superficial similarities between Rowling's Wizarding World and real Witchcraft, but, by viewing these texts through my Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the model Wiccan spectator recognizes elements of Wiccan practices in the books, films, and paratheatrical activities. I specify three identity markers in the category of Wiccan practices – the wearing of ritual costumes, the use of ritual tools, and the creation of ritual spaces. I call these three markers “ritual keys,” for they are designed to open mental and spiritual locks, allowing for personal transformation and change. In Rowling's Wizarding World, the spell “*Alohamora*” opens locked doors. Images of keys abound through the first *Harry Potter* film.<sup>86</sup> While these “keys” all open real, physical locks, the Witch's ritual keys act as symbols. J.K. Rowling's creative use of imagery relating to folkloric witches and wizards offers an opportunity for Witches to symbolically engage with the stories. For the Wiccan spectator, the identity markers of magical clothing, ritual tools, and sacred space act as “keys,” opening the mind to a performance of identity.

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<sup>85</sup>Portions of this chapter were published originally in *Phoenix Rising Compendium* in the article “Do You Want to Go to Hogwarts?: How Living Literature Makes it into Reality.” Used by permission of Narrate Conferences. See Appendix E. Other portions of this chapter were published under the pseudonym “Zebrine Gray” on *Patheos.com* in the Pagan Portal, Nov 19, 2010. Used by permission of *Patheos.com*. See Appendix E.

<sup>86</sup>For example, Hagrid introduces himself as “Keeper of the Keys.” The Gringott's goblin asks for Harry's key to his vault. Hermione uses the “*alohamora*” spell to open a forbidden locked door. Finally, Harry must capture a winged key in his quest for the Sorcerer's Stone.

Thanks to clever marketing, Rowling's *Harry Potter* books spun off into a cultural phenomenon, including seven blockbuster feature films (with one more to come in summer 2011), a plethora of merchandise, major book-release parties, academic/fan conferences, and now an interactive theme park experience. Perhaps to a greater extent than with *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the cinematic representations of *Harry Potter* – themselves a performed interpretation of Rowling's Wizarding World – function in tandem with (rather than in contrast to) the literary texts. The movies were co-released while the books were still being newly published and in close consultation with the author. Thus, the films themselves gained status as “canon” for fans. The interpretive gap between book and film closes, and the films became in a sense part of the “original text” from which the Wiccan spectator views the images of “witches” and “wizards” Rowling created. While these books have not yet been staged formally in a theatrical setting,<sup>87</sup> fans have created a variety of paratheatrical forms based on the books. At book parties and conferences, fans dress like the characters from the books and enact some of the activities, including the fantasy sport Quidditch. “Wizard Rock” is a genre of music developed by fans, while fan-fiction set in Rowling's “Wizarding World” abounds on the internet.<sup>88</sup> The *Harry Potter* stories have been used in a variety of educational activities,

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<sup>87</sup> The only references to *Harry Potter* being enacted on stage are for charity events including a performance at an elementary school in Dubuque, IA (Olson) and Landing Stage Youth Theatre Group in Chennai, India (Achuthan). Given time the story will likely be adapted for stage performance, though author J.K. Rowling stated in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that she specifically turned down an offer from Michael Jackson to make a musical of *Harry Potter* (“Transcript”).

<sup>88</sup> One of the greatest challenges faced within fandom is the issue of copyright. “Many fans assume that these creations are technically illegal – in copyright-specific terms, infringing – but not harmful to copyright owners and therefore not truly wrong,” explains lawyer Rebecca Tushnet (60). However, most fan-fiction would be defined by courts under the “fair use” exception of copyright law based on the amount of the original source material present, the purpose and characterization of the new work, and the commercial value. Most fan-fiction works would be considered “transformative,” in that they “add new insights or meaning to the original work” (61) or they reveal “what was presented in the subtext or context” (62). For a more comprehensive look at issues of copyright in fan-fiction, see Christine Ranon's article “Honor Among Thieves: Copyright Infringement in Internet Fandom.”

including religious education (particularly at Unitarian Universalist churches).<sup>89</sup> For the sake of this chapter, I will first offer a brief Wiccan reading of the theatrical films in relation to costumes, tools, and space. I will then examine two specific paratheatrical adaptations, an online Wizarding School and an academic/fan conference. While both of these sites attract non-Witches, some of the practices and presenters blur the line between fantasy and reality. Some claim that the popularity of *Harry Potter* has increased mainstream acceptance of Wicca by making the folkloric witch – and witchcraft in general – more accessible on a broad level, but many Witches avoid *Harry Potter* for fear that the books and films present witchcraft in a trivial way. Often Wiccans are quick to emphasize that the *Harry Potter* books are works of fiction that do not show a realistic portrayal of Witchcraft as a religion.<sup>90</sup> As Wiccans work to establish religious legitimacy, few want outsiders to confuse their reality with fiction. However, I will demonstrate how the *Harry Potter* stories offer Wiccans an opportunity to engage with people of other faith groups, decreasing their marginalization and increasing their visibility.

I must clarify that I am in no way arguing that the *Harry Potter* books “promote” Witchcraft or should be avoided by people who have other religious beliefs (despite some of the more vocal criticisms).<sup>91</sup> I do not claim that J.K. Rowling is Wiccan or that her stories teach the religion of Witchcraft. She has stated many times that the magic in her stories is strictly fiction

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<sup>89</sup> In 2003, the UU Church of Kent, OH presented a workshop at the Unitarian Universalist Association’s General Assembly, where representatives from thousands of UU churches meet, about hosting Harry Potter themed day camps (Haines and Goekler). From 2004-2010, I served as Director of Religious Education at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge and Headmistress of their program “Hogwarts School of Magic and Fun” which ran from 2005-2010 with as many as 200 participants.

<sup>90</sup> The most often cited article about the Wiccan denial of Harry Potter is Ben Roy’s “Wiccans Dispute Potter Claims,” though I have heard this same argument often in person by Witches who fear trivialization.

<sup>91</sup> In *Hour of the Witch*, Steven Wohlberg suggests that J.K. Rowling and Scholastic are “*unknowingly* being used by the same entity that deceived perfect angels and spoke lies through the snake” (107). In other words, he suggests that Rowling may have been possessed by Satan, and he also asks, “Could there be something more than mere literary magic fueling the success of Rowling’s novels? Something more akin to a *real spell* cast by some sinister source?” (27). The video “Witchcraft Repackaged” (2002) claims that Harry Potter is taught by “practicing occultists” who teach “the dark arts of sorcery and divination: fortune telling, astrology, potion mixing, spell weaving and curse casting.”

and that she had no intention of “converting” anyone to any religion. In a recent interview with Oprah Winfrey, Rowling specifies that the books contain “a lot of Christian imagery ... That’s an allusion to a belief system in which I was raised” (“Transcript”). Yet the books, films, and paratheatricals appeal to fans of all faiths and are especially popular among Wiccans. While not claiming the magic of the Wizarding World as realistic, the Wiccan community enjoys the fantasy world and many participate in fan-related paratheatricals and find spiritual insight in the books and films. For example, in Peg Aloï’s review of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, she describes how the film recalled for her “the myriad magical lessons inherent in this story and their application to modern witchcraft and magical practice.” A more extensive analysis of spiritual themes in Harry’s Wizarding World is *The Seeker’s Guide to Harry Potter* by Geo Athena Trevarthen. The author calls her personal spirituality “Celtic Shamanism,” but many of her insights are readily applicable to religious Witchcraft. While *Harry Potter* may not be converting children to Wicca, the stories have served the Wiccan community well in offering refreshingly new views of witchcraft and magic and bridging the gap between them and the rest of society.

I have extensively discussed the semiotic significance of witch imagery in other chapters, but in *Harry Potter* the “wizard” image is presented as the male equivalent. In Witchcraft, the terms “wizard” and “sorcerer” are only rarely used to define religious beliefs. The word “warlock” is even more rarely used, as it has associations with the breaking of oaths.<sup>92</sup> Instead, men are also called Witches. The “wizard” image, a wise old man in robes with a long white beard, is well-known through characters like Merlin from the Arthurian legends and Gandalf from *The Lord of the Rings* but has little to do with religious Witchcraft. For some male Witches, though, the “wizard” image means as much or more than the “witch” image. Isaac Bonewits, in

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<sup>92</sup> The etymology of “warlock” as a “traitor or enemy” can be traced historically according to the online etymology dictionary (Harper “Warlock”), but the Wiccan choice to claim the term “Witch” but not the term “warlock” seems more cultural motivated within Wicca than based on history.



his book *The Pagan Man*, describes the historical use of the term as deriving from “Anglo-Saxson *wys-ard*, meaning ‘wise one.’ This originally may have referred to anyone whose wisdom was respected” (81). According to Bonewits, negative connotations of “wizardry” arose alongside the witch hunts, though the term is now used to describe “a powerful and wise magician, usually male” (82). He defines a “Pagan wizard” as “someone who tries to teach as well as practice an Earth-centered philosophy as part of his magic” (82). Some Wizards may practice Witchcraft, while others do not. Rowling’s Wizarding World includes both witch and wizard images. Though I will primarily be discussing the impact of her stories on Witches (male and female), the line between these identity communities is quite flexible.

### **Movie Magic - The Harry Potter Film Franchise**

In fall 2001, fans of the *Harry Potter* books awaited the films with both excitement and trepidation. Four of the seven books in the series had been released before the first film and many had clear images of the characters and world in their imaginations. Fans knew that the costume choices, the actors, and the setting would be more “fixed” based on choices made in the film series than it had with the books. All but one of the films were written by the same screenwriter, Steve Cloves, and at Rowling’s insistence the basic plot of the films stayed close to the plot of the books. However, the films drastically differed from each other based on directorial style. Chris Columbus directed the first two films (2001 and 2002), interpreting the source material quite literally. Alfonso Cuarón directed the third film, *The Prisoner of Azkaban*<sup>93</sup> (2004), with a much darker, more mature style, while Mike Newell directed *The Goblet of Fire* (2005) as an action-adventure. David Yates directed the fifth (2007), sixth (2009), and seventh (2010) films and is currently finishing the series by directing the final installment (planned for release 2011). Yates effectively brought an edgier style into the series of films as the characters

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<sup>93</sup> For the sake of brevity, I will use shortened titles throughout this chapter. All of the film and book titles begin *Harry Potter and the...*

mature. The first two films are really the only ones made specifically for children. In my analysis, I will not discuss all of the details of all of the films, but rather will focus on how they can be viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens in relation to Wiccan practices through the identity markers of costumes, props, and sacred space.

### **Wizarding Wear - Costumes as Ritual Keys in the Films**

In choosing costumes for the first Harry Potter film and laying visual groundwork for all of the subsequent films, costume designer Judianna Makovsky used a broad spectrum of inspiration. "There's no real period," says Makovsky of the film's costumes, "which range from Elizabethan ruffs to tartan plaids to Dickensian frocks" (Cagle). To the Wiccan spectator, the assortment of unique and interesting clothing is reminiscent of large Neo-Pagan festivals. Sarah Pike explains how Neo-Pagans create "magical worlds out of the mythological stories, fantasy, and science fiction that many of them have loved since childhood" (231n). The separation between Muggles (non-magic folk) and the Wizarding World shows visually through the costumes in the magical shopping area Diagon Alley, which Aloisius calls "even more magical than Rowling's description... the shoppers a mind-spinning array of colorfully-attired children and parents and wizards and witches." In this scene people wear a variety of robes in dark, rich colors and fabrics, top hats, cloaks, and variations of the conical witch or wizard hats. Their clothing choices designate their identity as belonging to the magical world rather than the typical jeans and shirts Harry wears from the Muggle world. Wiccans tend to wear specific "magical" clothing when in community with other Wiccans, and this choice of "costume" helps create group identity.

Clothing choices become even more important when a Wiccan dresses for ritual. As practitioners Amber and Azrael K write, "Costume for ritual... allows us to leave mundane, ordinary reality and enter ... a place where magick works and we can be transformed" (273).

Clothing acts as a ritual key, allowing each person “entrance” into a ritual state of mind. In a similar way, Hogwarts students change into their “school robes” while traveling to Hogwarts on the train, preparing for their entrance into the magical school. The school uniform, like most British boarding school uniforms, consists of pants or skirt, a white collared shirt, and tie, but over this Hogwarts students wear a sweeping black robe with a hood. In describing apparel for Wiccan ritual, practitioner Cunningham explains, “Robes range from simple bath-type designs to fully hooded and lined monkish creations, complete with bell sleeves guaranteed to go up in flames if waved too close to candles” (50). While all Witches do not wear matching robes (and, in fact, some Witches practice nude), robes can be an important ritual key, helping a group form solidarity of mind. Amber and Azrael K suggest that small groups should decide on dress restrictions “to enhance the group mind” (274). They cite as an example her own coven which asks all coveners to wear green robes but allows for many different styles. “The various styles of robes and shades of green, like the diverse trees in a forest, allow us individuality within our group” (274). The Hogwarts school uniforms, like any uniform, indicate the students’ belonging to a specific group, but the inclusion of “robes” as part of the uniform can be read through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens as a marker of identity.

Hats act as immediate identifiers for folkloric witches and wizards, though few Wiccans wear pointed hats as part of their ritual attire. More often ritual leaders (and sometimes participants) wear “crowns,” headdresses, or circlets representing the God and/or Goddess.<sup>94</sup> Throughout the films the Hogwarts students rarely wear hats. In the very first film students wear simple black conical hats in the Great Hall for the opening and closing feasts. The adults wear hats specific to their gender. Maggie Smith as Professor McGonagall often wears hats in

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<sup>94</sup> See Amber and Azrael K’s extensive list of possible ritual headwear on page 277 of their book *RitualCraft*. They include “pointed ‘witches’ hats” on their list, though crowns and horns are much more common.

the traditional witch hat shape, though several are uniquely designed for her, including a witch hat made of a Scottish plaid tartan she wears in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Richard Harris as Dumbledore wears tall conical hats in the first two films, but when Michael Gambon assumed the role after Harris's death for the third film, costume designer Jany Temime replaced it with a cap. These two characters are the most significant authority figures in the films, and they are also most-often pictured wearing hats specific to their gender, much like the Priest and Priestess are the most likely to wear ritual headpieces specific to their gender.

In the first film, Professor McGonagall introduces another important hat, the Sorting Hat which sorts students into "houses." McGonagall describes briefly in the first film, "While you're here, your house will be like your family." Though the films do not elaborate on the significance and symbolism of each house, Rowling purposefully connected the four houses to the elements of earth (Hufflepuff), fire (Griffindor), water (Slytherin), and air (Ravenclaw). As Rowling explained in an interview, "It is the tradition to have four houses, but in this case, I wanted them to correspond roughly to the four elements... it was this idea of harmony and balance, that you had four very necessary components and by integrating them you would make a very strong place" (Anelli and Spartz). Each house has its own color-correspondences, animal mascot, and magical properties. In the films, the house correspondences show through the students' uniforms. After Hogwarts students are sorted, their robes and ties indicate which "house" they are in by their colors.<sup>95</sup> The use of color and symbolism to identify each house with a specific element can be read as similar to Wiccan color correspondences. Different

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<sup>95</sup> The main characters are all in Griffindor house and wear robes accented with a red lining, a patch of a Griffindor lion, a red tie with gold stripes, and a red and gold scarf. Slytherins wear robes with green accents, ties of green striped with silver, a Slytherin snake patch, and a green and silver scarf. Hufflepuff robes are gold-lined with a gold tie with blue stripes, a badger crest, and a gold and blue striped scarf, and Ravenclaws wear blue-lined robes, navy blue tie with blue stripes, raven crest (though the eagle is the Ravenclaw mascot in the books), and blue-striped scarf.

traditions use varying correspondences,<sup>96</sup> but the Wiccan spectator would recognize the act of using four colors to designate the elements of earth, fire, water and air.

The clothing chosen by costume designers in bringing Harry Potter's Wizarding World to the screen can be identified by many Wiccans as similar to the clothing they use in expressing personal and group identity, particularly when dressing for ritual. While Harry Potter is fully capable of performing magic while dressed in muggle clothing (especially in the later films), dressing in "magical" attire helps him and his friends gain entrance to the magical community of the Wizarding World. Ritual robes, headpieces, and specific colors act as keys to bring the Witch into a magical state of mind and can clearly be recognized by the Wiccan spectator as an identity marker in the *Harry Potter* films.

### **The Wand Chooses the Wizard – Ritual Tools in the Films**

Ritual tools enhance many Witches' experience, allowing for a focus of mind and acting as ritual keys. The four primary tools of the Witch are the wand, the athame (ritual knife), the chalice, and the pentacle, though other important tools include the broom, the cauldron, various divination tools, and the book of shadows. All of these tools can be seen in some form in the *Harry Potter* films, though some are less obvious than others. The brooms barely resemble the Wiccan besom, the magical broom used for cleansing and purification. In the books and films, they are tools used primarily for recreation, allowing riders to fly and maneuver while playing the sport Quidditch. Most magical tools in the *Harry Potter* stories are used as educational resources for young witches and wizards, including cauldrons for potion-brewing and divination tools like crystal balls, tarot cards, and tea leaves used in the divination class. Magical books function as textbooks rather than "Books of Shadows." Magic in the Wizarding World is presented a "natural science," not a religion. As such, these tools are used in more

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<sup>96</sup> Cunningham provides a full list of correspondences for ritual robe colors (50-51) and Amber and Azrael K include an extensive table of color correspondences (476-477).

commonplace ways than the same tools might be used by a Witch. Yet the tools are a recognizable marker of Wiccan identity, even if they are used in different ways.

In Harry Potter's world, the wand is the most important magical tool. While young witches and wizards can perform some magic without a wand before they are trained, nearly all their magical training includes wand-work. In the first film, Harry visits Ollivander's wand shop to find his wand. Mr. Ollivander (John Hurt) explains, "The wand chooses the wizard, Mr. Potter." Most of the wands look very similar, though they are made of different types of wood with different "core" substances. For example, Harry's wand has at its core the feather of a phoenix, while other wands have dragon heartstrings or unicorn hair as their cores. Some are decorated or carved in specific patterns.<sup>97</sup> In the film, when Harry attempts to use the "wrong" wand, packages explode, but the "right" wand responds with a rush of wind and golden light. The wand is used to focus intention, much like a Wiccan wand, though it is used for a much wider variety of magical practices. Its use is almost always projective, whether sending out "sparks," spells, or even sauce for Molly Weasley's cooking. Wands are used as weapons, to direct curses and jinxes. They are also used for protection, healing, and general charms. Wizards and witches "duel" with their wands using rules very similar to fencing. The wand duels in *Order of the Phoenix* were so complex the director hired a specific wand choreographer, and each character developed their unique wand stance and technique. So, while a Wiccan spectator might recognize their "magic wand" as similar, the specific uses definitely vary.

The other projective magical tool in Wicca is the athame, a ceremonial dagger used for directing energy. Most of the things a Wiccan would do with an athame (protection, binding, and fire-related spells), the witches and wizards at Hogwarts do with their wands. However,

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<sup>97</sup> Fans can purchase wands designed after their favorite characters' wands from the film from The Noble Collection, the official movie memorabilia site. They include wands for all of the major characters and some minor characters, and some can only be bought as part of a larger set ("Harry Potter Wands").

the films do have one significant magical blade: the sword of Griffindor which Harry pulls out of the Sorting Hat at the end of *The Chamber of Secrets* and then uses to kill the basilisk. The character Dumbledore explains to Harry that the sword signifies Harry's choice to be sorted into Griffindor, a house associated with courage and will, rather than Slytherin, a house associated with dark magic. The sword of Griffindor represents Harry's true intentions and Will, to face danger bravely and with courage rather than succumb to darkness. This certainly resonates with the Wiccan spectator's understanding of the use of a magical blade.

The third primary Wiccan tool, the chalice, is a cup or goblet usually with a stem and base. The cup represents the womb, the site of creation, and is connected mythically to the "Holy Grail." The sacred drinking vessel is known in many ancient myths, including the cauldron that sustains the life of the family and the clan. According to Cunningham, "The Wicca see the cauldron as a symbol of the Goddess, the manifested essence of femininity and fertility" (29). All Hogwarts students are instructed to bring cauldrons for potions classes, and the drinking goblets in the Great Hall are stemmed and ornate like many Wiccan chalices. However, the most significant chalice can be seen in *Goblet of Fire* in the form of the Tri-Wizard Cup, which is sought after like the Holy Grail. The contestants in the tournament face many trials to reach this cup, though they do not know that it has been transformed into a "portkey" which takes Harry to a graveyard with a large cauldron, the site of his arch-enemy's rebirth. In some ways, the Tri-Wizard Cup becomes an anti-Grail through its ultimate association with death. To the Wiccan spectator, the chalice can be identified through these images.

The last major Wiccan ritual tool, the pentacle, is usually a flat plate or disc inscribed with certain symbols. The most common is the five-pointed star, the pentagram, which represents the four elements and spirit (Cunningham 33). The *Harry Potter* films do not show any pentacles or magical discs, but the element of Earth is represented clearly in a powerful

magical object, the “Sorcerer’s Stone.” Based on the folkloric “Philosopher’s Stone,” the film presents the stone as an object that was created by alchemist Nicholas Flamel. Its ability to create gold connects it to the pentacle’s association with material wealth, while its ability to extend life connects it symbolically to the Wiccan Deity. The stone in the film is roughly the shape of a pentagon, subtly reminiscent of the pentacle’s five points. While none of the characters use the stone as a primary magical tool, when viewing the film through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the stone reminds the Wiccan spectator of the element of earth and power over life and death.

### **Betwixt-and-Between: Creating Sacred Space in the Films**

The magical keys described above (costumes and props) help the Witch prepare to enter a ritual state of mind. Patterns, or repeated behaviors, allow participants to reach a state of liminality. According to Victor Turner, the liminal phase is “a no-man’s-land betwixt-and-between the structural past and the structural future” (*Anthropology* 11). By intentionally creating sacred space, a Witch purposefully creates this new reality “in a time that is outside time, in a place that is not a place” (Amber and Azrael K 117). The *Harry Potter* books and films do not show specific Wiccan rituals. Harry and his friends never cast a circle, call the elements, or perform magic in ways recognizable to the Wiccan spectator. However, the characters literally travel in liminal spaces through every installment of the series. “Magical spaces” function as a final ritual key, an identity marker by which a Wiccan can recognize the liminality of ritual in the Wizarding World.

Harry Potter’s first liminal experience begins when Hagrid taps a specific pattern on the bricks in the Leaky Cauldron pub to reveal “Diagon Alley,” the magical shopping center in London. This pattern on the bricks acts as a magical “key,” opening the space in between. The name, Diagon Alley, refers to a diagonal line, a juxtaposition between vertical and horizontal



realms. The Wiccan spectator recognizes this in-between world as a magical space. When Harry must find Platform 9 ¾ for the train to Hogwarts, he must physically pass through a barrier. While Wiccans are not asked to walk through literal walls, the “casting of the circle” is a mental and energetic barrier that creates a similar “enclosed space” (Amber K 507). The liminal space occurs on the “threshold,” which is not only the point of entering or but also the point at which psychological effect begins to be produced. The creation of sacred space at the beginning of a Wiccan ritual focuses on opening up this threshold for participants but excluding outside energy and negativity.

The second film, *Chamber of Secrets*, introduces floo powder as a new way to travel between spaces. By tossing this powder into the fireplace and stating intention, the person swirls through a type of tunnel to their destination. The intention must be stated clearly, or else the person could end up somewhere else. This happens to Harry when he attempts to travel to “Diagon Alley” but instead arrives in “Knockturn Alley,” a street focused on the dark arts. The name indicates that dark or dangerous things can occur at nighttime (nocturnally). A Wiccan understands the necessity of a clearly defined intention. As Amber and Azrael K explain, “The ritual begins with an intention to celebrate, transform, share some experience with others, or to explore the inner realms of oneself. Once the intention is set, the ritual can be designed to support that intent” (61). The intention defines the ritual style and action, and often ritual leaders state the intention aloud so that all participants can avoid confusion.

Another liminal space in the Wizarding World occurs through “apparition,” where through concentration a witch or wizard is able to disappear in one place and reappear in another place. Apparition is presented as a traumatic way to travel, requiring much concentration and effort, but it is also the quickest. To those who are well-practiced, apparition seems easy. To the Wiccan spectator, this represents deeper levels of ritual practice that extend

beyond the magic circle into everyday mindfulness, so that nearly every task becomes ritual. As Amber and Azrael K explain, "If 'lifestyle' is a continuum with 'sacred/magical' on one end and 'mundane/muggle' on the other, then rituals can help shift your whole life toward the side of sacred awareness" (9). At first, such a keen level of mindfulness can be frustrating and difficult, but with practice the Wiccan finds him or herself living and breathing sacred space all the time. At this level of practice, there is no separation between what is sacred and what is not. The Witch's entire existence takes place betwixt-and-between, constantly in a state of transformation and change.

As the stories and films are based in folkloric witch imagery, a Witch's very real magical practices sometimes appear to imitate this fictional world. But who is imitating whom? Are Wiccans dressing like the witches and wizards in Rowling's *Wizarding World*, or is it the other way around? Wiccan practices can be viewed through the identity markers of magical clothing, ritual tools, and sacred space. However, Wiccans also bring a vast amount of creativity into their interpretation of these practices. Their creativity takes more license with the "canon" as they interpret the source texts. Rather than imitating the *Wizarding World*, through a performance of identity some Wiccan spectators take inspiration from Rowling's books and the films to create entirely new worlds.

### **Performing Witch Identity in Fandom Paratheatricals**

Many paratheatrical enactments show how much fans of the books and films want to immerse themselves in the world of Harry Potter. Simply buying a copy of each new book became an occasion for enactment. The incredibly popular book parties began as a marketing ploy,<sup>98</sup> but for many they became an opportunity to enter the *Wizarding World*. At various

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<sup>98</sup> See Melissa Anelli's description of the development of the Harry Potter phenomenon in her book *Harry, A History*. As an editor for the "Leaky Cauldron" website, she had opportunity to see much of the development firsthand.

bookstores on the eve of the latter books' release, hundreds of children (and some adults) wore black-rimmed glasses and had lightning bolts drawn on their foreheads to emulate the main character. Many dressed in more extensive character costumes. The new theme park at Universal Studios in Florida promises to "really transport you there," according to actress Emma Watson in the teaser preview for the park on the *Half-blood Prince* DVD. Universal is advertising that the "whole Potter experience comes to life," through shops where one can purchase magical items and clothing, pubs where one can drink butterbeer (a beverage Rowling invented), and three different interactive rides. While some fans dress up as the specific characters at parties and conferences, other fans seem enchanted by the environment Rowling created. Children and adults of all ages want to really go to Hogwarts.

Performance scholar Francesca Coppa compares fan fiction to traditional theatre, as fan fiction creates an infinite number of "productions" which she claims are based on "the audience's shared extratextual knowledge of sets and wardrobes, of the actors' bodies, smiles, and movements to direct a living theatre of the mind (225). In the case of fan fiction, the audience claims agency over the stories and performs them accordingly. Coppa argues that most modern fandom grew specifically out of film adaptations of books: "It's only when stories get *embodied* that they seem to generate truly massive waves of fiction," she explains (229). Coppa ultimately believes fandom is "community theatre in a mass media world; fandom is what happened to the culture of amateur dramatics... we still make theatre together, for fun, except we cast the play from our television sets" (242). Those who engage in enactments of modern myths are consciously creating a theatrical rendition of fantasy worlds, adapting the worlds according to aspects most meaningful to them.

Though Wiccans are not alone by any means in their enactment of *Harry Potter*, when a Witch dresses in robes, holds a "magic wand" and creates a sacred "Wizards World" space,

the lines get blurry between “I’m a fan of Potter, so I’m dressing as a character I like,” and “I’m a fan and a Witch, so dressing as an inhabitant of the Wizarding World means enacting my faith identity.” Heavy involvement in Potter fandom may lead to encounters with “real” Witches who take elements of Rowling’s world seriously. In this section, I will discuss two paratheatrical sites in which “real” Witches and Wizards enact the witches and wizards of the fantasy Wizarding World, sometimes not even revealing their magical identities to the Muggles around them.

### **Performing Witch Identity at a *Harry Potter* Conference**

Phoenix Rising, an academic/fan conference held in New Orleans, Louisiana, May 17-21, 2007, provided opportunities for *Harry Potter* fans, including Witches, to engage actively in a paratheatrical of Rowling’s Wizarding World. Though several other *Harry Potter* conferences have been held throughout the country, this is the only one I have had opportunity to attend. The conference a vendor room filled with “witchy” paraphernalia like hats, robes, and wands, and many attendees dressed in fantastical costumes. None of the panels presented overtly religious or spiritual themes in *Harry Potter*, focusing more on literary analysis, fandom, psychology, and culture. However, a couple of the workshops blurred the boundaries into Witchcraft. Though none of the presenters identified themselves as religious Witches, I observed all three identity markers relating to practices (magical clothing, ritual tools, and sacred space) in the conference and its programming.

Fan conferences like this symposium encourage “cosplay,” or “costume play,” and some fans invest enormous amounts of time and money into their costumes.<sup>99</sup> For a Witch, the costuming of Witchcraft crosses a line from acting or play into performance of identity. Rather than trying to specifically imitate a character (as many serious cosplayers do), Witches tend to

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<sup>99</sup> See “Cosplay Costumes” by Melissa Mayntz and Mary White for more information about the cosplay phenomenon.

take what they like from characters and styles and personalize them to perform as their most magical selves. At Phoenix Rising, participants dressed in various levels of costume. In the vending area, a company called "Witch to Wear" offered "Fun and fabulous apparel and accessories for Marvelous Mavens, Mothers, and Maidens (and extraordinary gentlemen) for Halloween and in between, 'because there's a little witch in all of us'" (*Program* 91). This description recalls the Wiccan Goddess archetypes of Maiden, Mother, and Crone and encourages a positive view of the folkloric witch. Another company called "Which Hat?" sold "an assortment of head toppers for any witch or wizard in any shape and size" (91).

In addition to the costumes available in the vending area and worn by participants, several panels specifically discussed the costumes in the Wizarding World. In "Costuming Choices in the *Harry Potter* Films," academic costume designer Tarie made a presentation about "a number of the key costume changes and choices in the *Harry Potter* films, as well as several design theories behind them" (36). When viewed through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the spectator can appreciate this consciousness about the significance of clothing choices. In "Bringing it to Life: The Costumes in *Harry Potter*" professional costume designer Vikki Ortone explained "the basics of putting together the perfect *Harry Potter*-inspired costume" (35). Most Wiccans spend a lot of time and resources choosing the "perfect" ritual garb, though the results may not look much like the characters of *Harry Potter*. Practical workshops were also offered in "Creating the Perfect Hogwarts Scarf (and Other Magical Accessories)" by Amy Miller, "Accessories Make the Girl: Luna's Butterbeer-Cork Necklace" by Amy Wilson, and "What a Witch Wants - Jewelry!" by Elise. All of these accessories may seem minor, but for Witches even accessories have significance. In some ways, the panels are more appropriate than the vendors to Wiccan uses of costume, as most Witches create or adapt their own ritual clothing rather than buying it pre-made. The commercialization of the witch costumes in the vending

room, while appealing to me on a very superficial level, reveals a tension between the do-it-yourself costuming most Wiccans engage in and the “looks realistic,” for-sale/for-profit shops.

This tension shows even more through the sale of magical tools, which primarily manifested at Phoenix Rising in the shape of wands, available in all sizes and materials. One vendor, Alivan’s Master Wandmakers, offered “one-of-a-kind, numbered wands crafted from a solid block of only the finest hardwoods... of the highest quality available...anywhere” (Program 91). Another vendor, Phoenix Wands, plays on the concept of “age as authenticity,” advertising that they “handed down their skill of wandmaking through generations since 426 B.C.” (91). However, the “magic” wands were not used in many workshops or even in the “dueling” supplemental activity, which basically took place on paper. Most Witches would prefer to make their own “custom” wand than to buy an expensive retail wand, and their lack of use made the wands seem quite superfluous.

Divinatory tools, on the other hand, were used in ways very familiar to the Wiccan spectator. In particular, Amy Goetz, who claims training in “Shamanism” and “Celtic Wisdom,” (54), offered a hands-on workshop called “Divination: Useful Tool or Woolly Science?” where she led participants to explore various divinatory tools, including tarot cards. As she explains in the compendium of her presentation, metaphor and symbol can be seen as pathways “to discovering, really discovering, ancient archetypes that hold the keys to personal transformation. Tools like the labyrinth, the Tarot, and others can help you walk a path of deeper understanding...” (214). Goetz explained the elemental symbolism of the “Minor Arcana” of the Tarot as well as the “Major Arcana... the more momentous/greater secrets of the universe, including major life lessons, the archetypes and the hero’s journey” (218). The use of Tarot and other tools for divination is common practice for Witches and would be clearly

recognized by the Wiccan spectator. Some might claim Goetz was actually teaching a legitimate practice of Witchcraft in her workshop.

The conference itself formed a liminal space, separate from “Muggle” society. While the core programming was academic presentations, the conference offered “the counterpoint of exploratory education in a variety of forms, as well as the embellishments of convivial events, games and other activities, and elements that evoke the wonder and playfulness inherent in the *Harry Potter* series” (Program 5). Patterned after the books and films, the conference created a non-canon “wizarding school” called *L’Université des Arts Magiques* (10). All conference attendees were sorted into “houses” (named after various aspects of local Louisiana culture) and had the opportunity to earn house points. The conference also had space set up for attendees to play a non-flying version of the Wizarding sport Quidditch. The use of space was designed to give attendees a taste of the liminal space of J.K. Rowling’s Wizarding World. Viewing it through the Wiccan dramaturgical lens, the enactment of this liminality reminded me strongly of Neo-Pagan festival culture: a place where people dress up as witches and wizards, share in fascinating conversation and visceral experiences, and form personal connections to one another.

The concept of magical space was explored programmatically in “The Magic and the Profane” offered by Tilia Jacobs. She uses the theories of religious studies scholar Mircea Eliade to examine “Harry Potter’s existential journey through a symbolic world” (252). She specifically discusses Platform 9 ¾ as “a threshold between worlds. It physically separates the two realities while allowing passage between them” (254). A Wiccan thrives on creating sacred space in the threshold “between the worlds.” This idea was further explored by Karen Bayne in “Haunted Castles and Hidden Rooms,” another program about space. Bayne discussed “portals” between the Muggle world and the Wizarding World and the methods for traveling through them. “The

mental component of using these magical portals is apparently as important as inherent magical ability, whether from attentive concentration or specific knowledge of which brick to tap, wall to walk through, or phone number to dial," she explains (268). This resonates with the Wiccan mental concentration required in creating sacred space, as the action is based on visualization more than tangible reality.

While *Phoenix Rising* and other fan conferences based on *Harry Potter* are not intended specifically for Wiccans, they offer opportunities for the Wiccan spectator to engage and respond to images of witchcraft and wizardry in the *Harry Potter* films and books. While these conferences do not offer opportunities for specifically Wiccan practices, the Wiccan spectator recognizes images and identity markers relating to these practices. At the same time, Witches who attend such conferences have an opportunity to interact with fans of other faiths who also appreciate these fantasy images. In paratheatricals designed and directed by known Witches, this interaction is even more apparent.

### **Performing Witch Identity in an Online Wizarding World**

The "Wizard" image has created quite a stir in the larger Pagan community, primarily based on the popularity of the *Harry Potter* books and films. Oberon Zell-Ravenheart, a well-known Neo-Pagan and co-founder of the Church of All Worlds, created the online "Grey School of Wizardry," a paratheatrical activity based on *Harry Potter*. Zell-Ravenheart defines a "Wizard" as "an adept ('expert') in the realms of Magick, *arcane* ('secret') lore, mysticism, philosophy, and knowledge in a wide variety of areas... *wizardry* means 'wisdom'" (*Grimoire* x). Grey School (established 2004) is designed to give both male and female students an online experience very similar to Rowling's Hogwarts. The school now has over 1,000 students (including a large number of adults). Upon registration, the students are sorted into one of four elemental houses (or the adult "lodge" equivalent). They can take courses in sixteen different



areas of study, including Wizardry, Nature Studies, Magickal Practice, Psychic Arts, Healing, Wortcunning, Divination, Performance Magics, Alchemy & Magickal Sciences, Lifeways, Beast Mastery, Cosmology, Mathemagicks, Ceremonial Magick, Lore, and Dark Arts (*Companion* vii). In *Pagan Man*, Bonewits describes the online school, suggesting it targets young males “who were feeling excluded by the teen Wicca movement, most of which is targeted at girls and young women” (84). Zell-Ravenheart does not specifically seek only male students, however, and in a reversal of traditional nomenclature, female students also study to become “Wizards.”

In his book *The Companion for the Apprentice Wizard*, Zell-Ravenheart explains his process in developing the online school. He originally intended just to write *The Grimoire for the Apprentice Wizard*, a book about Wizardry for teenagers, “particularly Harry Potter fans” (ix). But when looking for referral resources, he found that online schools were expensive, for adults only, and were all specifically “Pagan” or “Wiccan.” As Zell-Ravenheart explains, “Paganism and Wicca are *religious* orientations, whereas Magick and Wizardry are *studies* and *practices* that are independent of any particular religion... this was an important distinction that I wanted to keep” (ix). He designed his online school for teens ages 11 and up (just like Rowling’s Hogwarts) and intended for it to appeal to those interested in Wizardry regardless of religious orientation. “‘Wizard’ is a *profession*, like teacher, doctor or lawyer. And just like a scientist or a teacher, a Wizard can be whatever religion he chooses (or none at all!)” (*Grimoire* x). Zell-Ravenheart assembled a large “faculty” of practitioners from many magical traditions, including Wicca, but the coursework is not supposed to teach any one religion. However, the lessons in Zell-Ravenheart’s books reinforce the identity markers of Wiccan practices: magical clothing, ritual tools, and sacred space.

Magical clothing forms a significant part of the department of “Magickal Practice” in both the *Grimoire* and *Companion*. In the introduction to “Wizardly Regalia” in the *Grimoire*,

Zell-Ravenheart explains how clothing functions as a psychological key: “When we put on any clothes we are creating a *persona* (character) to present ourselves to both others and ourselves within a context; all clothes are costumes designed to hide or reveal the real you” (112). Much like many Wiccan texts,<sup>100</sup> the *Companion* includes a disclaimer: “Now let’s be clear about one thing: it’s possible to be a Wizard without ever owning a cape or wielding a staff! But it’s easy (and fun!) to look and feel the part... As you work at becoming a Wizard, you may want to dress the part” (41). The *Grimoire* gives specific instructions on how to make a tunic, robe, and cingulum (a ritual belt commonly used in Wicca), among other apparel. He explains the significance of pointed “witch” or “wizard” hats by quoting fantasy writer Terry Pratchett: “Hats defined the head. They defined who you were. No one had ever heard of a wizard without a pointy hat – at least, no wizard worth speaking of. And you certainly never heard of a witch without one” (116). In the *Companion*, he describes the archeological history of pointed hats, mostly by referencing the “ancient hats” studied at the museum of Berlin (42). Yet, as I explained in my analysis of hats in the *Harry Potter* films, most Wiccans wear “circlets” or “headdresses” rather than traditional pointy hats. In the section on “A Wizard’s Jewelry” in *The Grimoire*, Zell-Ravenheart includes a description with a drawing of headbands or circlets adorned with moons and horns, “often worn by Priestesses and Priests” (117). The Wiccan spectator would recognize these as identical to those often worn by Wiccans in ritual.

Both the *Grimoire* and *Companion* give detailed instructions on creating, blessing, and using a variety of magical tools. “In some hands, these may be just psychological props; but properly made and consecrated, such tools can be reservoirs of magical energy that can be tapped into and used by the Wizard, much like batteries” (*Grimoire* 103). The student is given specific instructions on how to create and consecrate a “magick wand” for air, a “chalice” for

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<sup>100</sup> Recall the discussion in my first chapter about magical tools. Practitioner Scott Cunningham’s describes them as “enriching” but not “necessary” (25).

water, a “panticle” for Earth (claiming the term “pentacle” is incorrect), and an athame (magical knife) for fire (103-107). In the *Companion*, in addition to a section on “crafting magic wands” that look very similar to Wiccan wands, Zell-Ravenheart explains how apprentice Wizards can make a “light-up magick wand” like those “depicted in popular imagery, stories, and movies” (46). This wand uses a AAA battery to provide the effect, providing the apprentice Wizard “a truly magickal Wizard’s wand that actually lights up, just like in the stories!” (47). All four primary tools of a Witch are explored in depth in the *Companion* in a lesson in the department of “Performance.” This department explores stage magic and special effects “which have been used in enhancing the theater of ritual since the first campfire was lit” (122). In “Elemental Magics,” faculty member David Burtwell defines the “tools of the Wizard” based on the imagery from the “Magician” tarot card: the wand, the cup, the sword (or athame), and the coin/pentacle/disc (126). He explains, “One of the strongest powers a Wizard can possess is to have control over the Elements. This can be represented through the use of performance magic” (126). Burtwell then explains four magic “tricks” that appear to control earth, fire, water and air. The use of these four specific tools, while present in other magical traditions, clearly recalls the identity marker of ritual tools used in Witchcraft. The actual practices described in both the *Grimoire* and *Companion* look much like Wiccan spells. The “Workings” part of the “Practice” department includes “Spells for every purpose” (54-60) that look virtually identical to Wiccan spells as they are outlined in hundreds of Wiccan beginner books. The “Divination” department teaches “the art of foretelling or predicting the future – discovering things that are lost, hidden or secret” (108). Again, while the practice of divination hardly is exclusive to religious Witchcraft, the Wiccan spectator would easily recognize the divination tools as part of Wiccan practices.

The *Grimoire* includes an entire section on “Ritual Spaces,” including instructions on creating both permanent and temporary sacred spaces (160-162). The descriptions and illustrations all look like spaces the Wiccan spectator would recognize from Wiccan rituals. Then, two chapters are devoted to instructing Wizards to create rituals very similar to Wiccan rituals, explaining how to designate sacred space by “casting a circle” and invoking the four elements in the four directions, and invoking deities (160-177). Zell-Ravenheart describes Wizardly “Sacraments” as “something regarded as holy, or sacred. Ordinary acts or substances may be elevated to the status of Sacraments in a ritual context” (171). The specific Wizardly sacraments Zell-Ravenheart describes are fundamental aspects of Wiccan liturgy: the food and drink shared in ritual. He explains how to “consecrate” the sacraments through a description (and illustration) of the Wiccan Great Rite (the lowering of the athame into the chalice), though he does not call it by this name (179). In the *Companion*, the department of “Ceremonial Magick” recommends honoring the “Cycles of the Moon” and the “Cycles of the Year,” and the latter includes a description of the Wiccan Sabbats of the “Wheel of the Year” (215). The specific Wiccan ritual of “Drawing Down the Moon” is described in depth, with the teacher Moonwriter acknowledging that this ritual “is extremely important to many Pagan and Wiccan traditions” (218). The Wiccan spectator would clearly recognize the ritual elements relating to sacred space in both the *Grimoire* and the *Companion*, whether Zell-Ravenheart calls them Wiccan or not.

The Grey School of Wizardry relies on images known through *Harry Potter* and other fantasy works, blurring the lines between fantasy and reality. Further, as an “online” entity, the entire Grey School exists in a liminal space, betwixt-and-between levels of reality. While they claim the school is not specifically “Wiccan” and they do include magical instruction from other sources, this online school “performs” the Wizarding World in a way that is highly relevant to modern Witches, allowing them to engage in the fun and fantasy of the wizard image while

studying (and teaching) true magical arts. Several of the faculty members are well-known in the Wiccan and Neo-Pagan community. Raymond Buckland, sometimes called the “Father of American Wicca” and known for “introducing Wicca to the United States”<sup>101</sup> wrote the foreword to the *Grimoire*, consciously acknowledging that Zell-Ravenheart is imitating *Harry Potter* (iv). In the “Acknowledgements” of the *Companion*, Zell-Ravenheart thanks Elizabeth Barrette, the school’s “Dean of Studies” who “has been involved in nearly every aspect of the Grey School” (vi). Barrette self-defines as a Witch in the *Pop Culture Grimoire* and has written at least one ritual based on pop culture. Another faculty member, John “Apollonius” Opsopaus, is a Hellenic reconstructionist Neo-Pagan from Tennessee. While not specifically Wiccan, Opsopaus considers himself part of the larger Neo-Pagan community. I also find it interesting that he is among this group because his practice is much more research-oriented than fantasy-oriented, and yet he is a full participant in a paratheatrical activity based on a fantasy world. Based on their teachings, I am sure many of the other faculty members either practice Witchcraft or at least have working knowledge of it. In some ways, the Grey School is more instrumental in secretly teaching Witchcraft to children than anything J.K. Rowling ever imagined.

At Pantheacon (a large Pagan academic conference in San Jose, California) in 2008, I had opportunity to speak with Zell-Ravenheart directly about his use of the “wizard” image. Dressed as one might imagine Dumbledore, in star-spangled robes and pointed hat, he freely acknowledged the benefit J.K. Rowling’s works have had on the larger Pagan Community. He felt the difference between the *Harry Potter* stories and other fantasy worlds like Oz and Narnia is a matter of immediacy. “Her world is right in the middle of our world – it’s not inaccessible... You can’t find your way to Oz or Narnia. But you can find the magical world

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<sup>101</sup> These quotes came from Buckland’s website. He promotes himself primarily as Wiccan and is well-known for his published works about Wicca (“Raymond Buckland”).

that J.K. Rowling creates” (Zell-Ravenheart interview). While he claims he has long identified himself with the “wizard archetype,” he “used to be Merlin. Now I’m Dumbledore.” He pointed to the variety of costumes worn by Pagans and Wiccans walking through Pantheacon’s vending area. “We perform the roles we have chosen for ourselves. We are the Witches. We are the Wizards.” As is evident by his early work creating the Church of All Worlds based on the science fiction of Heinlein, Zell-Ravenheart is no stranger to the liminality between pop culture and religious practice. “We create stories, and they create us,” he explains. “The difference between magical people and Muggles is that we consciously shape this world” (Zell-Ravenheart interview). By creating the Grey School of Wizardry, he provides opportunity for Witches (and others) to perform their practices in a paratheatrical version of Rowling’s Hogwarts. He encourages association with the characters and symbols Wiccans find significant in Rowling’s Wizarding World.

### **Witches Performing the Wizarding World**

Both Phoenix Rising (and conferences like it) and the Grey School of Wizardry provide opportunities for Witches to perform identity through the Wiccan practices of costumes, tools, and space. However, for both of the aforementioned paratheatricals, religion was considered secondary to other goals. As a presenter at Phoenix Rising, I chose not to identify myself as Wiccan. My religious identity was separate from my identity as a scholar. None of the presenters identified themselves as Witches or Wiccan. The Grey School of Wizardry attempts to keep religion separate from magical practice, thus making its teachings more accessible to a broad audience. The faculty does not advertise their Wiccan training, and much of the Wiccan content is not identified as such in the lessons. Spirituality is kept separate from these enactments of the Wizarding World.

Stacey Wolf suggests that musicals lend themselves to “performed spectatorship,” indicated by singing along, tapping of toes, and the like (33). By definition, fan-generated paratheatricals include performed spectatorship. Those who engage in enactments of modern myths are consciously creating a theatrical rendition of fantasy worlds. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown how a spectator viewing fantasy through a Wiccan dramaturgical lens could recognize identity markers relating to Wiccan culture, beliefs and practices. The most powerful and visceral way a small number of Wiccans perform response spiritually to the *Harry Potter* stories is by creating rituals based on the stories. In my conclusion, I will discuss the significance of these Wiccan performed responses.

**CONCLUSION:  
WICCAN PERFORMED SPECTATORSHIP OF MODERN MYTH**

I have modeled my Wiccan reading of these three fantasy performance texts loosely on Stacy Wolf's lesbian reading of mainstream musicals in *A Problem Like Maria*. While she never claims that the artists are lesbians or that they intended to portray lesbianism, her queer reading of heteronormative musicals discovers a transgressive potential, finding new meaning in the texts she chooses. She also never argues that all lesbians automatically would recognize the images and symbols, but merely that they could. And while she limits her analysis to a few well-known musicals, she has used the same strategy to analyze other musicals, including her queer perspective on *Wicked* in "Defying Gravity: Queer Conventions in the Musical *Wicked*." In a similar way, I argue that the supposed Wiccan spectator, viewing through my constructed Wiccan dramaturgical lens, recognizes significant Witch-related imagery in fantasy texts, claiming the fantasy witch image as a source of empowerment and identity formation. Some Witches perform these images through invocative rituals, enacting the characters and using the symbols to speak mythically to the ritual participants. Yet, through the process of research for this dissertation, I learned that many Witches and Pagans still react with hostility to fantasy witch images, particularly when I suggested that these images could be viewed from a spiritual perspective. I learned that my perspective of modern myth appears to be a minority amongst other Witches and Pagans. However, I believe that this makes my thesis all the more important. Against popular Wiccan dismissal of texts like *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and *Harry Potter*, I argue that by reinterpreting these images, Witches have the opportunity to redefine themselves and the cultural baggage associated with the folkloric witch.

Response theory based on theatrical performance is highly complicated, much more so than a printed text, because it "is an interactive process, which relies entirely on spectators to



achieve its effects," according to theatre scholar Susan Bennett (67). "The spectator comes to the theatre as a member of an already constituted interpretive community and also brings a horizon of expectations..." (139). When a Witch views fantasy witches on stage, in film, or in paratheatrical activities, subcultural definitions create a huge horizon of expectations. For many Witches, the expectation is that the media will "get it wrong." They get so concerned with whether or not the fantasy portrayal of a witch accurately reflects their "serious" religion that they miss the signs and symbols that are available. At the same time, a non-Witch audience responds to the same fantasy images and sometimes allows them to reify prejudices, fears and judgments about religious Witchcraft. The expectations in viewing and responding to fantasy witch imagery are thus quite significant for those who identify themselves as part of the Witch subculture.

Yet, as I outlined in my explanation of semiotics, signs are never fixed within culture, and especially not within performance. According to Bennett, audiences create their understanding of "a particular fictional world on stage with its own dynamic and governing rules" by receiving and interpreting a "combination and succession of visual and aural signs... some fixed but the majority in flux"(140). Performances, particularly those by minority subcultures, have often been created specifically with the goal of reinterpreting pre-existing signs. When Glenda Dickerson and Breena Clarke play with racist stereotypes in *Re/membering Aunt Jemima: A Menstrual Show*, they are not showing approval of this denigrated symbol or assuming that the audience will consider their racial concerns as less "legitimate." They claim and reinterpret the sign as a symbol of power. Performance allows opportunities for minority voices to be heard and for stereotypes to be reinterpreted, disrupting the expectation of mainstream identity definitions. Performance of fantasy witch images need not merely be a re-doing that copies faithfully older traditions of doing. Rather, it can be a doing that re-signifies,

a tactical syncretism that alters/assimilates a new authenticity. Theatre and performance traditionally create and recreate new imagery based on existing texts, and these images are then interpreted by the audience.

The primary form of religious practice for most Wiccans is through the performance of rituals. While in common usage the term “ritual” is often used to describe any “rote” or “routine” behavior, I prefer Geertz’s definition of ritual as “consecrated behavior”(112). Wiccan rituals are intended to connect participants to each other and the cycles of nature which they consider sacred. Performance scholar Henry Bial calls ritual “a particular kind of performance. It emphasizes efficacy over entertainment... Ritual has ‘real’ consequences. Religious or sacred rituals express or enact belief, connecting the participants to a spiritual power” (*Performance* 77). The terms “consecrated” or “sacred” indicate that rituals are specific times and spaces set apart from the everyday, mundane world. They are performances specifically designed to bring individuals into a specific mental state of being, but group rituals also serve to validate experiences and create normative communitas. “Generally, rituals exemplify and reinforce the values and beliefs of the group that performs them” explains Bial (77). The subculture is strengthened through these specific performed actions.

Ritual practice has been analyzed by performance theorists, theatre practitioners, anthropologists, religious studies scholars, and theologians of all religions. A common question is how to determine the efficacy of ritual, either for individuals or for groups. Performance scholar Jon McKenzie defines efficacy of performance “in terms of liminality – that is, a mode of activity whose spatial, temporal, and symbolic ‘in betweenness’ allows for social norms to be suspended, challenged, played with, and perhaps even transformed” (27). Efficacy of ritual can be judged by the subjective experiences of participants. Schechner and Appel call this “a certain definite threshold” where audience and performers agree on the efficacy of the performance (2).

Hughes-Freeland describes performance as “bringing into being out of nothing, an act which is magical, and which is made efficacious by the interaction with the audience; creativity is in the space between the actors and the audience” (Hughes-Freeland 15). Only the audience members can decide the significance and efficacy of any performance, particularly a ritual performance. Individual interpretations then contribute to subcultural reinforcement.

Religious studies scholar Catherine Bell claims one purpose of ritual is “to dramatize, enact, materialize, or perform a system of symbols” (*Ritual Theory* 31). However, she warns against performance theorists emphasizing the communication aspects of ritual at expense of the participants’ experiences, encouraging, “an approach to ritual activities that stresses the primacy of the social act itself, how its strategies are lodged in the very doing of the act” (67). By focusing on the “performance” as an act which accomplishes something for the participants (much like a performative utterance is language which accomplishes action), we raise the stakes from mere performance to significant religious experience. As Bell continues, “The framework of ritualization casts a new light on the purpose of ritual activity, its social efficacy, and its embodiment in complex traditions and systems” (67). The act of ritualizing creates both individual and group identity. Performance scholar Felicia Hughes-Freeland claims, “A ritual is not a text with a pre-established structure of meanings, but something which emerges as participants bring together bits and pieces of knowledge in the performance: it creates reality and selves experientially” (15). While the signs and symbols have established meanings, the act of ritual embodiment brings these signs into new context and, effectively, into a new reality. In order to be open to this possibility, participants must accept the possibility that the meaning of the signs can be altered and changed.

Repetition forms an important aspect to ritual for many people, and practitioners from many religious traditions resist drastic changes to these repeated actions. Bell claims, “A ritual

that evokes no connection with any tradition is apt to be found anomalous, inauthentic, or unsatisfying by most people" (*Ritual: Perspectives* 145). Bial agrees, "Rituals are based on repetition, and though most rituals change somewhat over time, we look to them as fixed points from which we measure the rest of our experience" (77). However, for the purpose of this study, I am most interested in trends toward innovations and change within the religious traditions of Wicca. This trend is not limited to newer religious groups. Bell discusses at length the current trend toward ritual change and invention, "There are very few religious groups that are not concerned today with how best to adapt traditions of worship to shifting social and spiritual realities" (210). This shows through the sheer variety of worship styles available in churches, synagogues, mosques and meeting houses. Ritual scholar Ronald Grimes explains that while theologians and anthropologists traditionally have considered "invented ritual" to be a "contradiction in terms" (109), workshops experimenting with invented rituals have become quite common in what he calls "countercultural spirituality" (110-111). In addition to analyzing specific religious rituals, Grimes also discusses theatre practitioners like Jerzy Grotowski who blurred the boundaries between ritual and performance through his "experiments" (115). Wicca certainly fits within the countercultural, experimental movement.

Regardless of religious tradition, innovations produce backlash from traditionalists. Many people express vulnerability about their religious beliefs and practices, and thus they strive for legitimacy and authenticity. Yet, a practice need not be "old" to be legitimate. Bell claims, "Today there is a growing social legitimacy for many types of ritual improvisation as well as the unprecedented visibility of the very dynamics of ritual invention..." (224). This view recognizes that religious rituals, like all other aspects of culture, change according to the needs of the practitioners. Religious rituals, like those practiced by many Wiccans, balance between

traditional structure and creative innovation. Just as signs and symbols can change in meaning through time and practice, rituals and the subjects of those rituals can also change.

Within Douglas Cowan's continuum of Wiccan participants, those who engage in magic and ritual based on modern mythology fit within the category of "innovator" considering the small number in the subculture engaged in these performative activities. In performance of identity, innovators make the strongest impact and have the greatest transgressive impact. The stereotypical "witch" sign could serve as an insult and derogatory image, or it could be used as a statement for solidarity amongst a subcultural identity group. As other marginalized subcultural groups have found voice and representation through performance, Wiccan ritual innovators can also express themselves through enactments of modern myth. A prime example of a fantasy-oriented ritual innovator in practice is Taylor Ellwood, author three books relating pop culture to magical practice (*Pop Culture Magick*, *Multi-media Magic*, and *The Pop Culture Grimoire*). Ellwood believes the immediacy of pop culture gives it primacy over ancient myths. Rather than requiring historical research or learning another language, Ellwood argues, "Pop culture is current, representing our time, our cultures, and our space" (190). Ellwood strongly advocates modern imagery as a valid source for magical (and spiritual) work, and the basis of his argument is a focus on the present instead of the past. For Witches who recognize the relatively new nature of this religion (despite its ancient mythistory), what Ellwood calls "pop culture" (and I call modern myth) can be the most creative, contemporary, and effective source of magical practice.

While not as common as traditional mythology, some Witches have used modern myths in their eclectic rituals. Ellwood cites the use of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Harry Potter*, Britney Spears, and personalities from TV commercials. Sabina Magliocco mentions an invocation of Darth Vader from *Star Wars*. She concludes, "Apparently, it makes no difference whether a

spirit originated as part of a religious system, or as a character in a fictional story; both types can be invoked..." (*Witching Culture* 177). Elizabeth Barrette writes of her creation of a ritual based on *Narnia* ("Out of the Wardrobe"). As a Wiccan practitioner, I have participated in rituals based on many modern myths including *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Pokemon*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Wicked*, *Peter Pan*, *The Chronicles of Narnia* and *Avatar*. For those who are willing to open their minds to modern myth, popular culture provides an immersive experience in mythology that is not available when working with ancient myths. When Witches read the books, see the movies, listen to the soundtrack, and own paraphernalia related to a modern myth, they are steeped in the lore of an entire fantasy world, creating much more immediate symbolic significance than the distant and removed mythology of an ancient past.

Through the imagination, readers (and viewers) of fantasy can travel to other worlds, worlds where "impossible" things happen. Ritualization allows worlds only imagined to have even greater significance. As Geertz argues, "In a ritual, the world as lived and the world imagined, fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms, turn out to be the same world, producing thus that idiosyncratic transformation in one's sense of reality" (112). Through symbolism, a Wiccan ritual can bring the significance of fantasy and imagination closer to participants' understanding of reality. This also reinforces the connection between ritual and theatre, according to Hughes-Freeland, as both exist "between reality and imagination" and require "a suspension of disbelief in actuality" (12). Just as audience members must willingly suspend their disbelief to fully participate in theatre, ritual participants also suspend disbelief to travel to fantasy worlds which exist only in the imagination. In an effective ritual, this allows for both individual and community transformation while fostering a healthy sense of play.

The concept of play also intersects many disciplines: theatre and performance studies, anthropology and cultural studies, and ritual, mythological and religious studies. Sometimes called “hilaritas” or “ludic,” this concept arises again and again. Bial defines “play” as an action that is “neither ‘serious’ nor ‘real,’” but that acts as “the force of uncertainty which counterbalances the structure provided by ritual” (*Performance* 115). This view of play balances the “seriousness” of ritual actions. Performance scholar John Huizinga claims that play “transcends the immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action” (117). He claims, “In all the wild imaginings of mythology a fanciful spirit is playing on the borderline between jest and earnest” (119). Turner’s influential book *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* explored the concept of play from several angles. He explains that “play might be work, might be serious within a non-serious dimension” (34). According to Turner, some “religions of the Book” have “deliminalized” their rituals and lost this sense of play (85). Liminality encourages a playful interpretation of signs and symbols. Deliberately reinterpreting images and symbols plays with their traditional meanings.

Play is a significant part of any liminal ritual practice, but even more so in Neo-Paganism, which is well-known for its sense of playfulness. In the book *Drawing Down the Moon*, practitioner Margot Adler claims, “The Pagan community is one of the only spiritual communities that is exploring humor, joy, abandonment, even silliness and outrageousness as valid parts of spiritual experience” (335). Religious studies scholar John Morreall discusses the comic nature of Neo-Paganism which “allows for considerable playfulness” (143). He explains how many new religions tend more towards comedy than tragedy in the classic sense. Most Neo-Pagans recognize this as a significant aspect of the religious tradition, though it manifests in many ways. Neo-Pagan writer Star Foster compares this sense of play to pop culture imagery from *The Lord of the Rings* in her blog:

We are the closest things to Hobbits you will ever see. Few of us would turn down Elevensies and fewer still would pass up on a good story or toe-tapping music. We are hearty, happy and joyous folks. We tend to have similar interests and will quote fantasy and sci-fi at random. We also have a lot of in-jokes, and out-jokes and any other kind of joke you can think of. Quite simply, we are a hoot. ("13 Things I Love About Pagans")

Even research-oriented Neo-Pagans engage in a sense of fun and lighthearted play within the larger Neo-Pagan community. "When Neopagans meet in large groups for extended periods, they call their gathering a 'festival.' Revelry and mirth are a big part of such occasions," explains Morreall. He continues, "Seeing the humor in life is part of this festive attitude" (143). However, despite their levity, most Neo-Pagans want to be taken seriously as a religion. Morreall agrees, "In a certain sense, all religions are serious – they care about what is central or sacred in their tradition" (143). Yet, performance studies scholars have clearly outlined that play can be serious, and that ritual requires an attitude of play. Huizinga and Turner based most of their final work on the concept of the concept of play. To play with established signs and stereotypes is not new within Neo-Paganism or within performance.

I would further argue that the practice of fantasy-based Wicca could be considered a type of "deep play." While Geertz did not originate the term "deep play," his article "Notes on the Balinese Cockfight" certainly brought it into common usage in the field of performance studies. He defines "deep play" as "play in which the stakes are so high that it is, from [a] utilitarian standpoint, irrational for men to engage in it at all" (432). Many Wiccans refuse to be identified in public for fear of persecution, and others refuse to acknowledge the influence of fantasy based on fears of trivialization. To "play" with fantasy as a legitimate spiritual source raises the stakes for Witches. Some Witches claim the images of witches and wizards in pop culture have absolutely nothing to do with Witchcraft as they know it, and many are quick to take offense to the suggestion that fantasy witches may reflect their religious identity in any way. This practice risks engaging with these stereotypes, but it also has the possibility of



finding the deeper meaning in the symbols and strengthening the subculture. While it may be considered by some to be deep play based on the perceived risk, by incorporating ritual innovation and change within established structure, fantasy-oriented Witches recognize the need for and legitimacy of play.

In a day-long workshop offered by Cherry Hill Seminary in February 2010, Witch and ritualist Steven Posch taught how stories contribute to individual and collective identity. He believes, "The role of ritual is to connect the received narratives to the divine to the personal narrative." Posch was clear on the need for ritual to be theatre, showing the myth rather than just telling it. He strongly advocates the use of mythic symbolism without necessarily defining all of the symbols. "When you have to tell people what it means, you've already failed," he explained. By actively engaging a willing suspension of disbelief, Witches create a spiritual sort of live-action fan-fiction. They continue the stories, sometimes altering stories according to their own interpretations, while finding deeper symbolic significance in the stories through their immersion in modern myth. As Francesca Coppa argues, this type of fandom can be considered "community theatre in a mass media world" (242). Those who engage in enactments of modern myths are consciously creating a theatrical rendition of fantasy worlds, adapting the worlds according to aspects most meaningful to them. Wiccan rituals based on fantasy images are examples of this type of enactment, this type of "community theatre," where fantasy fans not only get the opportunity to travel to these worlds of imagination, but they are also able to re-create aspects of the stories and use the experiences to form a stronger subcultural identity. Most radical performance forms only reach a small audience, especially at first. The examples I cited of theatre of identity based on race, gender, and sexuality all began in very small venues, often reaching only those who already identified with their specific subculture. By performing within an enclosed Wiccan community, Witches are able to engage

with the problematic signs of fantasy witchcraft and determine how best to present these images to the world.

In her article about a Narnia-inspired ritual, Elizabeth Barrette describes the importance of getting others to “buy in” to a ritual using modern myth (which she calls “pop culture”). She explains, “You don’t want them to laugh it off as ‘not real magic’” (57). She claims that the use of modern myth creates “a higher chance of resistance from other people. Some will just laugh and not come. Others will outright attack you for doing something so outrageous... Assure people that you’ve done your homework and you’re going to deliver a satisfying, effective ritual” (58). Many Witches feel the need to draw a firm line between entertainment and meaning, assuming that the same text could not be a source for both. Perhaps it is because of my theatre training, but I find deeper meaning in nearly every form of entertainment. I especially appreciate the active nature of performing myths through ritual, taking our understanding of them to a new level and creating new myths for the future. Barrette agrees, “Today’s ‘classic mythology’ was yesterday’s pop culture. Today’s pop culture will become part of tomorrow’s classic mythology. And it’s the cultural icons that are best loved that will survive” (59-60). In a thousand years, is the Celtic Goddess Brighid going to be as well known as Glinda the Good? Will we remember Asgard, the country of the old Norse, or Aslan’s country? Or will the Egyptian sun-god Horus be as popular as Harry Potter? While the “ancient” myths of many cultures still have resonance for many Witches, the modern myths provide such rich imagery and powerful symbolism.

Witches can (and do) read and view fantasy texts, and they can (and do) perform the images for their own use. I disagree with those fellow practitioners who would say that these texts offer nothing. Modern myth elevates everyday experience into the realm of the sacred. If someone finds transformation and empowerment by watching a movie or reading a book, then

they can find inspiration in the moments of everyday life. This truly is earth-centered spiritual practice, focusing on the here and now rather than the distant past or future afterlife. The practice of magic is rooted in the “imagination,” the ability to visualize clearly something which is not present. According to Magliocco, “Both artists and magicians use imagination and the resources of the unconscious to manipulate objects and symbols to make manifest a vision” (*Witching Culture* 149). By incorporating imaginative imagery into ritual magic, Neo-Pagans cross a threshold between art and spirituality.

The witches and wizards of *Oz*, *Narnia*, and *Harry Potter* have only just begun to impact my personal mythos. As I watch or read new fantasy works, I interpret them through my Wiccan dramaturgical lens. I believe this likely will impact my creation of future academic works and ritual performances. After engaging three modern myth rituals in 2009 based on *Narnia*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Harry Potter*, my coven created and performed two more (*Star Wars* at Samhain and *Avatar* for a full moon).<sup>102</sup> In culture, Witches need not be afraid of claiming the Witch image and identity, though fears and persecution still exist. In their beliefs, Witches take inspiration from an earth-centered revelation of the sacred, but the Earth continues to be threatened by human selfishness. And the practices of a Witch, the ritual keys of Wiccan faith, still seem to scare people in the mainstream. Yet, the Neo-Pagan movement is poised on the brink of major changes that might grant the religious movement more legitimacy in broad society. The marginalization I describe in reference to Wiccan culture is changing, slowly but surely. Rather than hiding in the broom closet, many Neo-Pagans are developing campaigns of

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<sup>102</sup> Last year many Witches and Neo-Pagans were especially inspired by James Cameron’s *Avatar*. The catholic Pope declared that this movie promotes “paganism and nature worship” (Moretti), and many Neo-Pagans agree (though his response was to avoid it while the Wiccan response was to see the film over and over again). This film sparked many discussions about how it is a valuable reflection of the Earth-centered revelation of the sacred and interconnectedness of life that makes magic possible.

activism and awareness in the public sphere.<sup>103</sup> Cherry Hill Seminary, the first Pagan seminary to achieve degree-granting status, is working diligently to train professional Pagan clergy.<sup>104</sup> Cherry Hill regularly posts Pagan-related calls for papers and conferences, and Witches and Neo-Pagans are answering these calls. When Witches perform their responses to fantasy witchcraft images, they claim empowerment through an interactive relationship with the imagery. When the Wiccan spectator invokes fantasy characters in religious ritual, he or she claims the image as a manifestation of his or her identity as a Witch. By claiming and performing images that were not originally intended as/for present-day Wiccans, the proactive spectator has the opportunity to re-write the future of Witchcraft.

Through fantasy, many Wiccans forge connections with those outside their chosen identity group. I may not talk to everyone I meet about my Wiccan identity or even wear specifically Neo-Pagan jewelry in public in some places, but I can wear a “Hogwarts” jacket and get into a hearty discussion about *Harry Potter* with a Christian or a Hindu or a Jew. After I saw the most recent *Narnia* movie, I engaged in deep discussions with my Christian parents about the theological themes. Attending *Wicked* has become a pilgrimage of sorts for me (having now seen the musical in five venues), and I have discussed it with Buddhists, Christians and Unitarian Universalists. Depending on their reaction to a discussion of fantasy witches, I may be more open to speak to them about my religion. The magical worlds of fantasy bring witchcraft and magic into a much broader context, allowing for Witches to find a liminal space between the magical and Muggle worlds.

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<sup>103</sup> See, for example, the Lady Liberty League which offers “Religious freedom support for Wiccans, Pagans, and other Nature religions practitioners worldwide” (“About the Lady Liberty League”). One of their most well-known successful endeavors won Pagan veterans the right to have a Pagan religious symbol (the pentacle) on their federal gravestones (“Veteran Pentacle Quest”).

<sup>104</sup> See the “Cherry Hill Seminary” website for more information about the mission and goals of this institution. In addition to training clergy, Cherry Hill has gotten involved in several Pagan advocacy projects, including legal fights to provide equal Pastoral Care to prison inmates and participation in interfaith associations and the American Academy of Religions and the Parliament of World Religions.

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**APPENDIX A:  
REPRINT PERMISSION FROM FANTASY FICTION INTO FILM**

**From:** Jessica Zebrine Gray [mailto:zebrinelady@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 25, 2010 9:44 AM  
**To:** Lois Grubb  
**Subject:** Seeking permission to republish essay

February 25, 2010

Lois Grubb  
McFarland  
Box 611  
Jefferson NC 28640  
FAX (336) 246-5018  
lgrubb@mcfarlandpub.com

To McFarland Publishing,

My essay, "From Witch to Wicked: A Mutable and Transformational Sign," was originally published in the anthology *Fantasy Fiction into Film* edited by Leslie Stratyner and James R. Keller, published by McFarland & Company, Inc July 18, 2007.

I have used portions of this essay in my dissertation, "Witches, Wizards, and Wicca, Oh My!" for Louisiana State University doctoral program of theatre. My defense date is March 11, 2010, and after defense my dissertation will be published electronically via Louisiana State University. Portions of my original essay were used in two chapters of my dissertation, found on pages 11-22 and 70-103, though they have been drastically rewritten and refocused for my current project.

Please respond as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Jessica Gray  
15462 Marjorie Drive  
Baton Rouge, LA 70819  
[Zebrinelady@cox.net](mailto:Zebrinelady@cox.net) or [Zebrinelady@yahoo.com](mailto:Zebrinelady@yahoo.com)  
(225)773-2376 (phone)

RE: Seeking permission to republish essay

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To: "Jessica Zebrine Gray" <zebrinelady@yahoo.com>

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Manager, Business Dept.

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# *From Witch to Wicked: A Mutable and Transformational Sign*

JESSICA ZEBRINE GRAY

The cackling, ugly hag with green skin and pointed hat flies on a broomstick through the night air. This stereotypical Halloween witch is built from folklore, superstitions, and cultural iconography, some dating back to the Renaissance when the image was used to encourage the persecution and oppression of women. Most often it is reviled and cast aside as inaccurate. But could this image be reclaimed and used to challenge stereotypes? The musical *Wicked* questions traditional oppressive binaries, breaking down the definite distinction between good and evil. This essay explores the witch image in European folklore, L. Frank Baum's original book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, the iconic film, Gregory Maguire's novel *Wicked*, and finally the highly successful musical to show how this sign has changed and transformed to reflect society's views of good and evil.

According to Saussure, in his development of semiotics, signs are "unchangeable" in that each one is "the product of historical forces" (72). Yet, the same sign is always mutable (75). Derrida took this theory further, exploring how any sign can be traced through its genealogy, finding the moments of change and rupture which allow us "to transform concepts, to displace them, to turn them against their presuppositions, to reinscribe them in other chains, and little by little to modify the terrain of our work and thereby produce new configurations" (24). Many forces built the image of the "Wicked Witch," which has changed significantly throughout its history. The sign developed in Renaissance Europe, but transformed into the American "Wicked Witch of the West" through a chain of literary, theatrical, and film moments that reflect the social pressures of their time. While aspects of the sign harken back to early images of witches, the sign continues to shift in content and meaning.

**APPENDIX B:**  
**REPRINT PERMISSION FROM *THE BAUM BUGLE***

**From:** Jessica Zebrine Gray [mailto:zebrinelady@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 3, 2011  
**To:** Scott Cummings  
**Subject:** Seeking permission to republish essay

January 3, 2010

**The Baum Bugle: a Journal of Oz**  
c/o Scott Cummings, editor-in-chief  
P.O. Box 622 / Gambier, OH 43022  
[BaumBugleEditor@gmail.com](mailto:BaumBugleEditor@gmail.com)

To Mr. Cummings,

My essay, "The Wonderful Witches of Oz" was originally published in the spring edition of *The Baum Bugle*, 2010.

I have used portions of this essay in my dissertation, "Performing Modern Myth: Claiming Identity Through a Reading of Fantasy Witchcraft" for Louisiana State University doctoral program of theatre. My defense date will be in spring 2011, and after defense my dissertation will be published electronically via Louisiana State University. Portions of my original essay were used in one chapters of my dissertation, found on pages 92-135, though they have been drastically rewritten and refocused for my current project. I am writing to officially obtain permission to re-use my work.  
Please respond as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Jessica Gray  
102 Pondsides Lane  
Torrington, CT 06790  
[Zebrinelady@cox.net](mailto:Zebrinelady@cox.net)  
(225)773-2376

**Re: Seeking permission to republish essay**

Monday, January 3, 2011 11:39 AM

**From:** "Scott Cummings (Baum Bugle)" <BaumBugleEditor@gmail.com>

**To:** "Jessica Gray" <zebrinelady@yahoo.com>

Hello Jessica,

Very nice to hear from you. Yes, you have full permission to reproduce any aspect of your article in *The Baum Bugle* in your dissertation. Please just cite the original publication in your references.

Best wishes with completing your thesis. The final drafts can seem like such a chore (some say 90% of the effort goes into the last 10% of the writing), but I am sure that the final product will bring you rewards that make it all worth it. I'd very much enjoy knowing when your dissertation is available from LSU. I also see you are now in CT and hope you are enjoying life there.

Cheers,

Scott Cummings

---

**The Baum Bugle: a Journal of Oz**  
c/o Scott Cummings, editor-in-chief  
P.O. Box 622 / Gambier, OH 43022



# THE WONDERFUL WITCHES OF OZ

by Jessica S. Gray



As one of the most quoted stories of all time, the *Wizard of Oz* has become a representation of America for many people. The image of four unusual travelers searching for a home, heart, brain and courage speaks to an underlying need for American identity, particularly for women. What makes us who we are? Do we really have all we need inside of us already? L. Frank Baum's original story pushed traditional boundaries of gender in regard to the roles of women, creating a binary between "good" and "wicked" witches. The 1939 MGM film adaptation specifies that physical appearance should be a determining factor in judging the goodness or wickedness of a witch. Few people sympathize with the Wicked Witch of the West, the green-skinned antagonist who threatens Dorothy and her friends, representing all things wrong in the world. However, new interpretations of Oz show a world much more complex. The current Broadway musical *Wicked* makes the green

witch its protagonist, subverting the traditional negative image, and juxtaposing her experience to the white witch, Glinda. Through the relationship of the two witches, the musical appeals especially to young girls who

identify with feelings of confusion and rejection, blurs boundaries of female sexuality, and provides positive role models. This article will explore the shifting images of the witches of Oz through analysis of the original book and its adaptations, the experiences of women playing some of these roles, and the implications for audiences of *Wicked* today.

## The epitome of goodness

When L. Frank Baum wrote *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* in 1900, women's suffrage in the United States had not been granted, though the movement was very active. Baum had personal stakes in women's suffrage through his mother-in-law, Matilda Gage, who worked extensively in the movement. Thus, part of his creative work included questioning traditional gender dynamics. In all of his Oz books, Baum shows women to generally be more effective than men in leadership roles. Baum represents Dorothy and the good witches as helpful and powerful, while male characters are either nonhuman or "misfits of society," perhaps because, according to Michael Riley, Baum "did not have much faith or confidence in the aggressive American male who was bringing 'civilization' to this new country. It is obvious that Baum had somewhat advanced or unorthodox ideas about power and authority" (Riley 154). By giving authority to women and children, Baum questions their traditional subservient roles. Up to this point in United States history, women and children were

little more than property. Baum's fantasy shows a world where women and children have opportunities to use their strengths. By making his protagonist pre-adolescent, Baum taps into a different stage of development—one in which girls can be "androgynous, having the ability to act adaptively in any situation regardless of gender role constraints," claims clinical psychologist Dr.



**APPENDIX C:**  
**REPRINT PERMISSION FROM *PHONIX RISING: COLLECTED PAPERS ON HARRY POTTER***

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**Sent:** Thursday, February 25  
**To:** Narrate Conferences, Inc.  
**Subject:** Seeking permission to republish essay

February 25, 2010

Narrate Conferences, Inc.  
P.O. Box 149  
Sedalia, Colorado 80135  
[info@narrateconferences.org](mailto:info@narrateconferences.org)

To Narrate Conferences,

My essay, "Do You Want to Go to Hogwarts? How Living in Literature Brings It into Reality" was originally published in the anthology *Phoenix Rising: Collected Papers on Harry Potter* edited by Sharon Goetz, published by Narrate Conferences, Inc 2008.

I have used portions of this essay in my dissertation, "Witches, Wizards, and Wicca, Oh My!" for Louisiana State University doctoral program of theatre. My defense date is March 11, 2010, and after defense my dissertation will be published electronically via Louisiana State University. Portions of my original essay were used in one chapters of my dissertation, found on pages 206-220, though they have been drastically rewritten and refocused for my current project.

Please respond as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Jessica Gray  
15462 Marjorie Drive  
Baton Rouge, LA 70819  
[Zebrinelady@cox.net](mailto:Zebrinelady@cox.net)  
(225)773-2376 (phone)

Re: Seeking permission to republish portions of essay  
Thursday, February 25, 2010 8:07 PM

From: "Hallie Tibbetts" <hallie.tibbetts@narrateconferences.org>  
To: "Jessica Zebrine Gray" <zebrinelady@yahoo.com>  
Cc: info@narrateconferences.org

Dear Jessica,

It's no problem at all, whether you use the original or an edited version. For your inclusion in the Phoenix Rising compendium, we asked only for a license to use your paper in the collection, rather than something more exclusive, and you're more than welcome to re-publish it at any time! (Also, if you've substantially rewritten the paper, it might even be considered a new work and not under the license you signed for us anyway.) Congratulations are in order, and our best wishes for your defense! Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Cheers,

Hallie Tibbetts  
Vice President  
Narrate Conferences  
[www.narrateconferences.org](http://www.narrateconferences.org)

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO HOGWARTS?:  
HOW LIVING IN LITERATURE BRINGS IT INTO  
REALITY

*Jessica Zebrine Gray*  
*Louisiana State University*

Do you want to go to Hogwarts? I know a lot of children and adults who dream about going to this magical castle filled with mystery and wonder. When we open the pages to J. K. Rowling's books, we are given the opportunity to travel to this English boarding school in our imaginations...but what if we could create a "Hogwarts" environment right here in Louisiana? Would anyone want to go to Hogwarts here? This will be our third summer offering Hogwarts School of Magic and Fun at the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge. Our camp is similar to Vacation Bible School (VBS), but since the Bible is not considered to be the authority in UU churches, we decided to host a Vacation "Magic" School. Unitarian Universalism (UU) prides itself on being non-creedal and open to all people and life-affirming ideas.

Our version of the magical school of "Hogwarts" includes a three-dimensional theatrical environment in which adult volunteers invest tremendous time and energy so that children can learn spiritual and social values. We offer the day camp in July, and we already have full registration with a waiting list. We have children and adults who talk about this summer camp all year long. In the past we have only offered a one-week camp, but this year we have expanded to two weeks leading up to the release of the fifth film and the seventh book. I have been asked to speak at several conferences about how we run the camp, and several other churches are now working off of our model. So what makes this experience so

**APPENDIX D:  
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**Subject:** Seeking permission to republish essay

January 3, 2011

*Patheos.com*  
Star Foster, Pagan Portal Manager  
[starling.foster@gmail.com](mailto:starling.foster@gmail.com)

To Star Foster,

My essay, "Alohamora: Ritual Keys in Harry Potter's Wizarding World" was originally published on *Patheos.com* on November 19, 2010.

I have used portions of this essay in my dissertation, "Performing Modern Myth: Claiming Identity Through a Reading of Fantasy Witchcraft" for Louisiana State University doctoral program of theatre. My defense date will be in spring 2011, and after defense my dissertation will be published electronically via Louisiana State University. Portions of my original essay were used in one chapters of my dissertation, found on pages 184-236, though they have been drastically rewritten and refocused for my current project.

Please respond as soon as possible.

Thank you,

Jessica Gray  
102 Pondsides Lane  
Torrington, CT 06790  
[Zebrinelady@cox.net](mailto:Zebrinelady@cox.net)  
(225)773-2376 (phone)

**Re: Seeking permission to republish essay**

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**From:** "Star Foster" <starling.foster@gmail.com>

**To:** "Jessica Gray" [zebrinelady@yahoo.com](mailto:zebrinelady@yahoo.com)

You own that. I didn't purchase it from you. All you did was give us permission to print it. You retain all rights over your work!

Sorry, should have made that clear! Good luck on your dissertation!

Star



## VITA

Jessica Gray earned her bachelor's degree in theatre at the University of North Carolina (1999) and her Master of Arts in theatre at Florida State University (2001). She has directed many plays and especially enjoys finding intersections between theatre and earth-centered spirituality. She has published one play, several articles in academic journals and books, and two curricula. She is a third-degree initiated Priestess and co-founder of the Spirit Wheel tradition, a blending of fantasy-oriented eclectic Wicca and Tibetan Buddhism. She is currently living (in the broom closet) in Connecticut with her husband Rhye, her young daughter, Ariana, and her parents.