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Good and Evil: A Psychological Transformations in Maleficent (2014)

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ABSTRACT: Good and evil play a prominent role in this universe. People adhere to certain rules that guide them toward the good side as well as rules that lead to the evil side. Actions that do not harm anyone are considered good deeds, while those that cause harm to others are classified as evil deeds. Some individuals may be driven toward evil due to their past experiences or other reasons. Conversely, many people can change from being evil to good, depending on their circumstances and psychological state. Furthermore, elders are responsible for guiding their children from evil to good, as children learn by observing society without fully understanding the underlying issues. This study examines the concepts of good and evil through the lens of two characters from the movie Maleficent. It also delves into their backgrounds to understand the reasons for their transformations. Ultimately, this research offers a new perspective for the upcoming generation, helping them to develop a balanced understanding of good and evil.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many people believe that children's literature exists mainly to provide pleasure. However, in addition to entertainment, children's literature imparts deep moral lessons that are essential for the development of future generations. Many children's authors address various issues affecting children in their works, which helps guide young minds toward positive paths. Among the best-known authors are Roald Dahl, C.S. Lewis, J.K. Rowling, and Dr. Seuss.

One notable example is the plot of 'Maleficent' (2014), which teaches children about the concept of evil and emphasizes that goodness ultimately prevails. Maleficent is a character derived from Disney's original animated movie 'Sleeping Beauty,' directed by Marc Davis. The live-action film serves as an adaptation inspired by the 1959 animated version.

The screenplay for 'Maleficent' was written by Linda Woolverton, who also penned the sequel, 'Maleficent: Mistress of Evil'. In this story, every character possesses both good and evil traits shaped by their circumstances. Some characters may experience psychological disorders or traumatic flashbacks, and without proper guidance from parents or guardians, children can develop misguided ambitions, leading them toward darker paths. The narrative focuses on two leading characters: Maleficent and Stefan. This analysis shows that both characters embody aspects of good and evil due to their unfiltered ambitions, which ultimately leads to a conflict between them. In the end, evil is vanquished while goodness endures.

Furthermore, this paper examines the dual nature of humanity, as no one is entirely pure or born evil. Personalities are shaped by their surroundings, as pointed out by the author. The study explores how the plot of "Maleficent" fosters positive personality changes, particularly through the character of Maleficent, while also discussing the psychological nuances of good and evil.

2. THE TWO SIDES OF PERSONALITIES

In "Maleficent," the story begins with a beautiful young girl living in the moors, where she has elegant wings that symbolize strength, superiority, and beauty. One day, she meets Stefan in the deep forest, and he is the first human to attract her. Over time, they both fall in love, but Stefan fails to demonstrate his true feelings for her; he does not show her any loyalty. Meanwhile, Maleficent trusts him completely. However, as the years pass, Stefan gradually distances himself from her. Eventually, Maleficent comes to terms with the changes in their relationship. At that point, King Henry attempts to capture the moors and Maleficent's wings, but she fiercely defends them and destroys his plans.

At that moment, the king declared that anyone who brought him Maleficent's wings would be rewarded with the throne. This announcement changed the course of the entire story. Stefan wanted to be king, so he chose a favorable day to meet Maleficent and, betraying her trust, he cut off her magnificent wings in his pursuit of the throne. Maleficent soon discovered that she had been betrayed. From that point on, she revealed her darker side. Initially, before she embraced her evil persona and her id dominated her ego, she was a good person. The id represents the most primitive part of personality, operating on the pleasure principle and seeking to satisfy basic desires (Feist, 2009).

This study demonstrates that before Stefan severed her wings, Maleficent was kind and loving towards everyone. However, after being betrayed, her character transformed entirely. Her personality changed, illustrating that a person is not born evil; rather, it is the circumstances they face that can alter their nature.

In this study, we examine how Maleficent's love for Aurora is truly unparalleled. When Aurora lies on her deathbed, Maleficent faces numerous challenges to enter the castle. She brings Prince Philip with the hope that his kiss will break the curse. However, when he kisses Aurora, she does not awaken. Maleficent feels deep disappointment and begins to doubt the existence of true love in the world, believing that she alone is responsible for the curse. In the end, Maleficent states:

I will not ask your forgiveness because what I have done to you is unforgivable. I was so lost in hatred and revenge. Sweet Aurora, you stole what was left of my heart. And now I have lost you forever. I swear, no harm will come to you as long as I live. And not a day shall pass that I don't miss your smile"

Ultimately, Maleficent kisses Aurora's forehead, and in that moment, Aurora opens her eyes. This revelation of pure love surprises even Maleficent, who previously doubted that such love existed. This moment highlights Maleficent's good side, and the research points out how she manages to balance her dual nature. In contrast, Stefan's actions, betraying Maleficent and cutting off her wings, clearly illustrate his evil character. His primary ambition was to become king, and he used Maleficent for his own gain. This scene reveals his selfish nature, as he exploits others for his purposes and disregards their suffering. Stefan shows no sympathy for Maleficent's pain; he is solely focused on fulfilling his desires. In the end, this behavior leads to his downfall.

3. PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA:

Good and evil coexist in this world, and people cannot judge others solely by their actions, as those actions may stem from past problems. In the case of Maleficent, she serves as both the protagonist and antagonist in the story, embodying both roles throughout the plot. In the beginning, she expresses love and care, but later reveals her darker side and ultimately shows her true, pure heart. This study explores how Maleficent manages her personality changes effectively. According to Bressler (1999), the id, ego, and superego are the three elements of personality in the human psyche that work together to create a balanced individual. Similarly, Stefan initially loved Maleficent, suggesting that he was also a good character at the outset.

However, both characters demonstrate their unfiltered ambition that leads them to face significant difficulties. This is evident in how Maleficent appears happy when Stefan expresses that he likes her wings and when she thinks of him at night. The root of Maleficent's attraction to Stefan can be explained through Freud's theory, which suggests that human instincts are divided into two categories: eros (life instinct) and thanatos (death instinct). The scene where Stefan betrays Maleficent by cutting off her wings, followed by her attendance at the celebration where she places a curse on Aurora, illustrates her struggle to protect the girl she has come to love as a mother. Initially, Stefan loved Maleficent, but his desires transformed him into an evil figure. This illustrates that both characters were driven by their unfiltered ambition; ultimately, Stefan's ambition leads to his destruction, while Maleficent faces numerous challenges in her quest to protect Aurora.

Maleficent's first encounter with anxiety stems from realistic anxiety, which arises when Stefan betrays her by severing her wings to secure his throne. This type of anxiety emerges from external threats, as Hall (1979) described, and is triggered by real dangers, such as war or crime that can cause harm. Maleficent's transformation into a malevolent figure manifests as an unbalanced personality, driven by her id, which dominates her ego in decision-making. When the id's desires are satisfied, one feels pleasure; however, when they are not met, it results in displeasure or tension (Boag, 2014). Cutting off Maleficent's wings represents both a physical and personal violation, and Stefan's actions signify a forced disruption in Maleficent's identity, clearly reflecting his own id.

4. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the paper, it highlighted both the good and bad aspects of the character. Ultimately, Maleficent managed to balance her personality disorder, despite having performed evil deeds and being influenced by psychological aspects such as the id, ego, and superego. This study did not exclusively focus on Stefan's character and his unwanted ambition, as most research has done. Instead, it addressed the complexity of people, showing that individuals can embody both sides and change due to their surroundings, as seen in Maleficent's life.

The article also discusses the negative consequences of the evil experiences that children may encounter, as well as how to live a moral and fulfilling life. It examines how unchecked ambition can lead to undesirable traits, making the younger generation susceptible to the allure of evil and unwanted ambition, similar to the characters of Maleficent and Stefan. This narrative serves as an excellent example for children, teaching them about the duality of good and evil and how individuals can be drawn to the dark side, as depicted in Maleficent's story.

Furthermore, Disney has set a new trend by portraying Maleficent, who was once an antagonist, as the protagonist in a new film. Previously, Disney typically featured purely good protagonists and purely evil antagonists. Maleficent undergoes a transformation from good to evil and eventually back to good. Such changes in personality do not occur in isolation; they result from a series of processes involving the interaction of personality elements (id, ego, and superego). Personality transformations can also trigger anxiety during the transition.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Aafrina B.: Conceptualization, literature analysis, investigation, and writing—original draft.

Dr. U. S. Akshara Govind: Supervision, critical review, and editing of the manuscript.

Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethics approval was not required for this study because it involved the analysis of published literary texts and did not involve human participants or animals.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data availability is not applicable to this study, as the research is based on the analysis of published literary texts.

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