INTERTEXTUAL TRANSFORMATION OF A FAIRY TALE FROM SLEEPING BEAUTY TO MALEFICENT

Bir Peri Masalının Metinlerarası Dönüşümü
Uyuyan Güzel'den *Malefiz*'e

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ABSTRACT: In 1959 Disney released their movie *Sleeping Beauty* based on the tale by the same name, arranged by Charles Perrault. It is a classic fairy tale. That is to say it describes a world in which the good are always kind hearted. As expected they never lose the battles against the strongest enemies and they live happily forever. In this world the bad are evil hearted. They are extremely cruel characters. They always appear to be enjoying their wicked doings. However their true story is never told, the audience are not eager to hear it either. They are more concerned about the happiness of the good characters. Fifty-five years later, in 2014 Disney came up with another movie, *Maleficent*. What is remarkable here is that by employing intertextual relationship, they managed to retell the same story building it on the villain, making the bad character, Maleficent of the old fairy tale the focal point of the movie. The audience are reminded of the worthiness of her story too. They are urged to question their perception of good and bad. Apparently *Maleficent* does manage to bring a new insight to its audience. This study compares Disney's 1959 movie, *Sleeping Beauty*, with the 2014 version namely, *Maleficent* which has been written in postmodern but highly original style. The long and winding road from classic view to postmodern approach has been explored in relation to the intertextual transformation within the context of a fairy-tale.[1]

Keywords: Intertextual Relationship, Sleeping Beauty, Maleficent.

ÖZ: Disney'in 1959 tarihli *Uyuyan Güzel* filmi, aynı adlı masalın Charles Perrault tarafından düzenlenmiş versiyonudur. Klasik bir peri masalıdır bu. Yani, iyilerin kalbinin daima iyilikle dolu olduğu, büyük zorluklarla, güçlü düşmanlarla savaşıp galip geldikten sonra sonsuza kadar mutlu yaşadıkları bir dünyayı anlatır. Kötülerin kalbi ise daima kötülük için atmakta-

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dır. Son derece acımasız tiplerdir. Kötülük yapmaktan zevk alır gibi görünürler. Onların asıl hikâyesinden hiç bahsedilmez. Seyirci de onlarla ilgilenmez. Düşünce ve duygularının arka planını merak etmez. İyilerin mutluluğa ulaşmasını bekler heyecanla. İşte Disney, *Uyuyan Güzel*'den metinlerarası ilişkinin ilginç bir türünü kullanarak yeniden ürettiği 2014 tarihli *Malefiz*'de klasik masalın kötü karakterini merkezine koyar. Onun hikâyesini anlatır. Bu hikâyenin de merak edilesi olduğunu hatırlatır seyirciye. Seyircinin iyilik-kötülük üzerine zihninde oluşmuş ön kabulleri sorgulatır. Sonunda da yerle bir eder bunları. Bu çalışmada metinlerarası dönüşüm bağlamında Disney'in 1959 yapımı olan peri masalı *Uyuyan Güzel* çizgi filmi ile ondan yola çıkılarak postmodern bir yaklaşımla kaleme alınmış ve özgün olmayı başarmış 2014 tarihli *Malefiz* karşılaştırılmıştır. Bu iki filmin kurgusu çerçevesinde klasikten postmoderne giden yolun kıvrımlarını keşfetmek, incelemek ve değerlendirmek amaçlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Metinlerarası İlişki, Uyuyan Güzel, Malefiz.

INTRODUCTION

Classic literature promises the reader a world full of hope. Bright tomorrows will certainly be reached, as long as belief in God exists and ethical norms are followed. In literary works reflecting this understanding time, place, and characters are openly fictionalized. The distinction between good and bad, consequently the good and the bad people is quite obvious. The goodness of the good and the evil of the bad are birth given and have no borders. There should be no questioning about why this is so. It must be accepted as characteristic features that cannot change. Most of the time the narrator is the third person omniscient. He has godlike powers so it is not surprising that he happens to know about everything.

However time has changed the political and social perceptions, certainly reflected in literature as well. After world has gone through lots of changes, the wars wipe away any good feeling left in people causing great distress and hopelessness. Having thus reached modernism, the bright tomorrows are now a dream that can never become true. Beliefs are shaken. The notion of goodness torn apart. World has turned into a dark place. Literature takes its share of this era. Suffering, tears and deep unhappiness pour out of all written works. Brand new expression techniques are discovered to reflect these feelings and thoughts. The narrator changes. The third singular person, but not omniscient or occasionally the character himself talks to the reader as the first singular person. He does not know everything contrary to the classic era. He even says, he knows nothing. Chaos grows.

Then the world marches to postmodernism. Surely the literature too. Yes, it is not easy to be full of hope and yet not impossible either. The conflicts can be resolved if questioning is allowed. What is goodness? Who is good? And who is bad? Are the hero and the villain as much opposite characters as generally believed? Is the goodness of the good and the evil of the bad never to change? Right at this point, to understand and perceive the reasons behind and reaching at sound conclusions are of utmost importance. Story telling techniques are plenty, narrators different and the expectations from the reader at its peak. The reader now has the responsibility to deeply question what he reads, even sees and to find his way in the labyrinth of life by employing his wisdom, logic, and feelings in the best possible way. He has to pursue this effort even if he fails at times, determined not to be overtaken by hopelessness.

This is at last the time that long forgotten genres of classic literature have the chance of getting back to daylight. Fairy tales are the most naive and sweet ones among them. They are ready to be rewritten with a postmodern view.

Regardless of our age, we are all drawn into the magical world of classic fairy tales with their extraordinary characters. The events begin in a happy and peaceful setting at a time many, many years ago. This ideal world gives hope but later a tragedy happens and the dramatic conflict emerges. However these tales do not sadden the reader. Good characters spread happiness starting from the moment of their birth. They behave in the best possible way in line with the universal ethical rules whatever the circumstances may be. They are never taken over by feelings like jealousy, rebellion, hatred and revenge. They never stop striving for the best for all people. They are so kind hearted that they can even forgive their enemies. They even do not mind dying for the cause. When they are faced with the hardest ordeals they never stumble and never do wrong even for a second. The bad characters have no boundaries for their evil acts. They are always at planning or doing something bad. They enjoy darkness. The reader expects that at the end of the tale they will take their lesson and be punished. The reasons behind their greed and hateful feelings are never questioned. In fact these ancient tales address the feelings rather than the rational thoughts. Thus the reader is filled with goodness, love and care, and is reminded of the importance of struggling for a better, more peaceful and happier world.

However the world is not the same any more. It keeps changing. Political and social balance is naturally expected to change too. Classical understanding loses its dominance. People find themselves in a struggle of coping with the problems of existence. Reaching the modernism era feelings, absolute belief, and hope are gone instead worries, questions and time to time despair and

deep sorrow prevail. The definition of many concepts changes. What is considered to be opposite is now debated as inter-mixed. Following the first half of the 20th century, the journey called life turns into a labyrinth having lots of questions along with the agony of not being able to find their answers. Nevertheless, in those years the postmodernists had started to have their voice heard, and believed that there was no need to be lost in deep sorrow. After all, this journey was not to last too long. So why not turn it into a puzzle and a game that can be played with readers and enjoy it. Postmodernist attitude, is highly complex just like the real life itself. Naturally, the character of the literary genres evolves in this direction. Both content and form change based on the new perception.

The tale, as one of the oldest type of literary works also takes a new shape according to the postmodernist approach.

The objective of this study is to explore the change that postmodernism brought to a classic tale in the light of intertextuality.

Most of the people know or at least have an idea about the well-known fairy tale *Sleeping Beauty*. In 1959, Disney had made an animated musical fantasy film by the same name based on Charles Perrault's edited version.[2] After 55 years, in 2014, Disney released another movie, *Maleficent*, by almost reinventing or reimagining this classic tale. Screenplay writer is Linda Woolverton.

Having watched both versions, what impressed me most was that while both films are clearly similar in many ways, they are also strikingly different. In other words, on one hand the intertextuality and on the other the originality. Therefore, in this study I've attempted to analyze this sameness and yet the distinctiveness between the two versions. Also the originality, although one is derived from the other. Robert McKee explains in his book *Story*: "Story is about originality, not duplication. Originality is the confluence of content and form-distinctive choices of subject plus a unique shaping of the telling. Content (setting, characters, ideas) and form (selection and arrangement of events) require, inspire, and mutually influence one another. With content in one hand and a mastery of form in the other, a writer sculpts story" (Robert McKee 1997: 11)

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[2] **Charles Perrault** (1628-1703), was a French author, poet, and member of Academie Française. In his later years, in his book Tales of Mother Goose (1697), he compiled for his children the tales like *Sleeping Beauty*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Bluebeard* and *Puss in Boots* which are known/classified as spoken literature and made each of them a world classic. Years later these have been rewritten by several authors the foremost of them being Brothers Grimm. They have been adapted to opera, ballet (*Sleeping Beauty* by Tchaikovsky) and cinema (Walt Disney film *Sleeping Beauty*, 1959). In world literature Perrault is named as the "*father of children's books).* In this study, 1959 Disney version of *Sleeping Beauty* which was edited by Perrault, has been used.

THE OPENING SCENE

Sleeping Beauty, begins with the first page of a pictorial book and a man's voice is heard saying "once upon a time". He is clearly the third person omniscient narrator and not one of the characters of the tale.

In *Maleficent* a woman's sweet voice is heard saying "Let us tell an old story anew and we will see how well you know it!" The audience are immediately taken, captured by the mystery of these words and are eager to know the rest of the story. Clearly this woman cannot be just a narrator.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Both versions have the same characters, namely:

Aurora: The sleeping beauty, the daughter of the king.

Stephan: The king of a human kingdom.

Philip: The Prince, the son of another king.

Maleficent: The Evil, wicked fairy with no wings in 1956 and with wings in 2014 version. Her power is endless.

Three pixies, fairy godmothers: Named as Mistress Flora, Mistress Fauna and Mistress Merryweather in 1956 but in 2014, the first fairy is called Knotgrass, the second Flittle and the third Thistlewit.

The Crow: The loyal servant of Maleficent. She calls him "my pet". Named Diaval in 2014.

BRIEFLY THE ORIGINAL STORY (1959 DISNEY- *SLEEPING BEAUTY*)

Once upon a time (the story takes place in the 14th century) in a land far away, there lives a king and a queen who have desired for many years to have a child.[3] Eventually, they have a sweet baby girl. Since she has dawned on their lives like a sun, they name her "Aurora", meaning dawn. Everyone is invited to the christening. The ceremony commences. The first guest is King Hubert. His little son, Philipp is with him. The two close friends who want to unite their kingdoms decide that Philip and Aurora will marry when they grow up.

Next, three fairy godmothers Mistress Flora, Mistress Fauna and Mistress Merryweather, apparently invited by the king and the queen, enter the hall. They fly over to the little princess and salute her with love. Each is allowed to give only one gift. Flora bestows her with beauty and Fauna with a wonderful voice. Next as Merryweather approaches the cradle to give her blessing, a loud rumble is heard. From the cloud of a green light, Maleficent, known as

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[3] *Sleeping Beauty*: An adaptation of the well known tale as an animated musical fantasy by Disney Studios in 1959 directed by Wolfgang Reitherman and Clyde Geronimi.

a very evil fairy, appears before the king and queen with the crow, her loyal servant. Green is the color of witches and dragons in world literature. Angered for not being invited to the christening, Maleficent places a curse on Aurora proclaiming that she would prick her finger on the spindle needle and die on her 16th birthday. After she leaves, Merryweather who has not given her gift yet manages to swap death with a deep, endless sleep from which Aurora can only wake up with true love's kiss.

The fairies know that this is not enough to keep Aurora safe, so they take her to a cottage in the forest, and decide to live as mortals, until her sixteenth birthday. One day, while strolling in the forest she meets the prince, Philipp, both not having any clue that they were engaged years ago to be married.

At the end, the curse is fulfilled. Aurora falls into deep sleep but returns to life by Philipp's true love's kiss.

Aurora reunites with her parents and marries Philipp. It is a happy ending as expected and in accordance with the characteristic of all fairy tales.

Rather predictably, it is about the emphasis on the importance of love in fairy tales and the expectation of a princess and a prince marrying and living happily ever after.

Here is a brief description of each character and their role in both movies:

Aurora

She is the daughter of the king Stephan and cursed by Maleficent in both movies.

In 1959 movie she marries the prince, Philip whose kiss awakes her. 2014 movie leaves it to the viewers to guess if and when she would marry Philipp who, in fact, is not the one who gives her the kiss of life in this version.

Stephan

He is the king in both versions. In 1959, he is much loved by the people of the kingdom, is a good hearted and generous man. In 2014 he is a greedy man portrayed like a villain and with a very interesting past.

Philipp

The son of the king, the prince, and the one who marries Aurora and saves her from her curse in 1959 version. You are in for a surprise in 2014 movie.

The Three Fairies

In the early version they are described as loving, caring, guardian angels of the little princess. In the late version in 2014, they appear to be selfish, fearful creatures who don't even much care about her.

Diaval

The crow. In both movies he is acting as the loyal servant of Maleficent however with the difference that in one for a good, and in the other for a bad cause.

Maleficent

In the old movie *Sleeping Beauty*, her character is portrayed as the evil, cold hearted fairy who can curse an innocent baby just because she is not invited to the christening ceremony. Philipp, the prince manages to kill her after a fight. So the story is telling us that the good finally, no matter what, wins over the bad. In 2014 *Maleficent*, the audience find themselves in a completely different setting.[4]

Instead of beginning with a much awaited, newly born princess the movie starts with a young fairy named Maleficent. Her size is that of any human child who would be at her age. She has a pair of wings at her back and horns on her head. Maleficent is beautiful and kind. She lives in the Moors, a fairy-land full of mysterious and magical creatures. Her land has borders with a hostile human kingdom. That is why humans are not allowed to enter the Moors. Right here, at the beginning of the movie, it is understood that something not seen or told before is about the happen.

REINVENTED TALE (2014 DISNEY–*MALEFICENT*)

As stated earlier humans were forbidden to cross the borders into this mysterious land of fairies. However, one day a young boy breaks this rule. The treasures of the Moors have sparked his interest. He sneaks in and steals a jewel. She captures the boy, appearing to be the same age as her. His name is Stephan. He is an orphan and is very poor. All he dreams of is to enter the castle and live there as a respected person with power. The two children become friends at once. Now you know what the past of the king Stephan was. He was just a poor boy with an ambition or better put, greed.

Stephan is surprised when the ring on his finger burns Maleficent's hand as they were shaking hands one day. When Maleficent explains him that iron burns fairies, he immediately takes off his ring and tosses it away. Iron is regarded as one of the most important symbols of materialism.

By throwing away his ring, Stephan wins something much more valuable, the heart of Maleficent. Their friendship is actually a very extraordinary one. It is as if this relationship ends the hatred between fairies and humans. When

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[4] *Maleficent*: A 2014 Disney fantasy film directed by Robert Stromberg. This live action film tells the story of the animated musical fantasy *Sleeping Beauty*, produced by Disney in1959, from the perspective of the evil fairy, Maleficent. The screenplay is by Linda Woolverton, starring Angelina Jolie as Maleficent.

Maleficent turns 16, Stephan kisses her and tells her that it is true love's kiss. Maleficent believes him with all her heart because she is a pure creature. She's free from lies and greed.

Stephan becomes a prisoner of his ambitions. Indeed, he slowly drifts away from Maleficent. He manages to become the King's servant. He starts watching for an opportunity to impress him and win his trust. Maleficent is very sad to see Stephan distancing himself from her.

In the meantime, she has become the protector of the Moors. The King gathers his soldiers to conquer the Moors and its treasures. Maleficent manages to defend her realm and fatally wounds the king in the battle. On his deathbed the king promises that he will marry her daughter with the one who kills Maleficent and make him his heir. This is an opportunity Stephan cannot miss. He goes to the Moors. He tells Maleficent that he has come to warn her. Maleficent is so kind hearted that she forgives Stephan for being carried away with his ambitions and abandoning her. She has no clue that he is back to deceive, to betray her. Indeed, Stephan has an evil plan. He drugs Maleficent to make her sleep. He unsheathes his knife but, cannot kill Maleficent for whatever good still left in him. Instead he cuts off her wings and takes them to the king as the proof of her death. Stephan gets his reward. He marries the king's daughter and gets the crown. Maleficent has an unstoppable, irresistible desire for revenge.

Diaval is the crow she saved from death. She asks him to become her servant. He accepts. Diaval would be her wings. Through him, she starts getting news of Stephan. Diaval, who is turned into various forms from human to wolf by her, notices the grief hidden behind Maleficent's cold face.

Meanwhile, Stephan has had a daughter: Aurora! Remember, 1959 movie starts with the christening of Aurora. Maleficent curses the baby. Stephan begs Maleficent to take her curse back. Maleficent changes it with a sleep that can only end if the princess receives true love's kiss.

This is only to take even a bitter revenge from Stephan, because they both know that such a love does not exist. Maleficent seals the curse with the words "This curse will last till the end of time. No power on Earth can change it." She too turns into a green light and leaves the hall. She retreats to the Moors and "revels in the sorrow that her curse has brought."

Maleficent watches Aurora closely, who was brought to a nearby village by the three fairies to protect her from the curse. She starts taking care of the little princess, since the three fairies know nothing about child care, exposing her to thirst, hunger and various other dangers.

In other words, she becomes the guardian angel of the baby she cursed. She is a very kind hearted child. Her character traits resemble to those of Maleficent's as a child. One day she comes across Maleficent and runs to hug her. Maleficent is surprised but does not stop her. The older Aurora gets, the more she wants to know about Maleficent and believes she's her "Fairy Godmother".

She wishes to break the curse and uses all her power for it. But a whisper repeats these words she had uttered nearly 16 years ago at the christening: "This curse will last till the end of time. No power on Earth can change it." Maleficent is helpless.

The 16th birthday is approaching. One day, on her way back to the cottage from a walk in the forest, Aurora runs into a young man. His name is Philipp. Aurora, is yet ignorant of the fact that he is a prince.

They are instantly attracted to each other and promise to meet again. They do not fall in love at first sight either. Just like in the 1959 version, the fairies are busy organizing a birthday party for Aurora. They are very happy because their mission is about to end. Although they like Aurora, they believe they wasted 16 years of their lives. Clearly, the intention here is to tear down the traditional "fairies are good" perception of the audience.

Eventually, they reveal the curse that Maleficent put on her. Aurora finds out that her fairy Godmother is Maleficent herself. Torn to pieces, she sets off to the castle in bitter disappointment.

Stephan has long been thinking of destroying Maleficent. The prosperity of the kingdom, his wife's sickness and death have not been a concern for him. He had sent his soldiers to the Moors to capture Maleficent and had iron webs constructed to stop her from entering the castle.

Stephan is now very different from the child that threw away his ring in order not to harm Maleficent. Greed and later fear made him lose his mind. He even does not care much for his own daughter.

The curse gets fulfilled and Aurora falls into sleep from which she can only wake up with the true love kiss. Maleficent and Diaval put their lives at stake and enter the castle.

As Maleficent predicted, Philipp's kiss does not work. Maleficent is devastated. At Aurora's bedside she says "I will not ask your forgiveness because what I have done to you is unforgivable. I was 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." Then she kisses her forehead.

She is in tears. The moment she turns her back to go away, Aurora opens her eyes: "Hello Godmother." Maleficent turns her face to her in great astonishment and joy and responds "Hello Beasty". The words "No truer love" spill from Diaval's mouth, who has been watching them. Yes, it is clearly demonstrated that there can be no truer love on earth than this. So you know now whose kiss brings Aurora back to life in 2014 version. However, Stephan is determined to kill Maleficent. He throws an iron web at her.

Maleficent turns Diaval into a dragon. Contrary to 1959 movie, Diaval is the dragon this time. In other words, he is the good character. As Stephan was about to kill Maleficent, Aurora finds her wings and sets them free. The wings, which are alive, fly back to Maleficent and attach themselves. They enable her to win the battle. The evil character who is Stephan in this version, is not killed by Maleficent. She gets the opportunuty but decides not to. Her love for Aurora overcomes the hate. He actualy falls to his death dragging Maleficent with him. She manages to free herself from his grip and her wings save her. Thus, the good wins, the evil loses.

Maleficent returns to her old happy and radiant self. She unites the two kingdoms. She gathers the inhabitants of the Moors and introduces them their queen: Aurora! Philipp is also there. It is understood that they will fall in love with each other.

The movie ends with these sentences, which reveal the identity of the mysterious narrator: "So you see, the story is not quite as you were told, for I was the one they called Sleeping Beauty. In the end, my kingdom was united not by a hero, as legend had predicted, but by one who was both hero and villain, and her name was Maleficent."

CONCLUSION

In both movies, apart from the magical powers of the fairies, after all both are fairy tales, we witness quite earthly events happening, and emotions displayed. More interestingly we see that even the fairies, good or bad, have humanly feelings and reactions. In broader terms good and bad exist in both worlds. Of these, what quickly come to one's mind are:

Modesty versus Greed

Revenge versus Forgiveness

Betrayal versus Loyalty

Love versus Hatred

Selfish love versus Selfless love

Innocence versus Corruption or Goodness versus Badness

Hero versus Villain

Remember Maleficent was the villain, Stephan the hero in the old movie.

In 2014 roles change, Stephan becomes the villain. He allows the greed to poison his heart to the point that he cuts Maleficent's wings to inherit the throne.

Maleficent is both hero and villain. From loving, pure, innocent fairy in her childhood she turns to be a cruel avenger, placing a curse on an innocent, new born baby, because of Stefan's betrayal. Later softened by the love she develops for Aurora, turns a hero by saving Aurora, getting rid of the villain, and uniting the two kingdoms. Her love for Aurora is selfless and true as Diaval said "no truer love".

Only Aurora seems to have kept her true identity as the innocent child, doomed for a curse in both versions.

Diaval was the crow who served evil plans in the old movie but fights against evil in 2014.

The loving, caring, good hearted fairies who were sincerely concerned for well being of the little princess, turn to selfish ones, thinking they have wasted their time looking after her.

1959 version is a classic fairy tale. Here, the distinction between the good and the evil is so clear that no question marks are left behind. The intention is to make us love the good and hate, condemn the evil without questioning.

The two texts are indeed intertextual because they stem from the same roots, have all the characters even by the same name. You may even think that you will just watch the same story with improved visual effects etc. However by just glancing at the opening scene, you realize that you are in for a surprise.

Because in 2014 movie the time is rolled back to the childhood of Maleficent. Eventually the audience are exposed to questions like who is good and who is evil? How should good and evil be assessed? What is true love? How does it evolve? What are the dynamics of its progress? The importance of questioning is emphasized. Subsequently, developing perfectly the cause and effect relationship, with a well-built story, it leads the audience towards finding the answers.

Despite their close kinship, each version is individually original. *Maleficent* created with a postmodern approach does manage to shatter many given perceptions in the minds of its audience. This new approach is remarkable. The clearly and cleverly conveyed message is that the truth might not be as it seems and that nothing should be taken for granted.

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