

MACHIAVELLIAN CHARACTERS IN DISNEY'S REVERIE

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ABSTRACT

This research tries to discuss the portrayal of Machiavellian manifestations of some villains in Disney's movies, and to what extent those characters embodied the qualities of a Machiavellian. Using a descriptive qualitative method, this study examines villains in some Disney's movie namely Prince Hans of the Southern Isles, from Frozen, and Jafar from Arabian Nights. By the end of the research, it can be concluded that some of Disney's characters employed Machiavellian manifestations varied from time to time. The portrayal of Prince Hans is more narcissists and manipulated than Jafar, and both of them have different way to achieve their goals to get more power. In term of Machiavellian traits, both of them embodied different personalities that somehow led to their downfall. For Hans from Frozen, The most appeared Machiavellian traits are disguise and he uses a lot of trick to reach his goals. Meanwhile, Jafar is more dark and seems cruel in appearance, he uses his power to threat and spread terror.

Keywords: *Disney's characters, Disney's movies, Machiavelli*

INTRODUCTION

Many children have access to the Disney animated movies, as they are popular for this age group and parents perceive Disney as quality family entertainment (England, Descartes et al. 2011) Furthermore, the marketing power of the Disney Princess line in particular enhances the probability that children will see one or more of the films. Most of the children all around the world must be known about some box offices Disney movie, such as, frozen, Cinderella, or snow white, that became some of successful hits in cinema.

While talking about Disney, we probably will talk about series of iconic figures of our childhood times. Range from all fairy tales to Mickey Mouse, to frozen, Disney's movies create powerful figures to

children's life. A typical Disney's movie will involve around magical fairy tales world, mostly about prince, and princesses. Most of the Disney story, since it was aimed for children, must include good moral value where most of the time, goodness will defeat dark side of the life. The hero in most of the Disney's story embodied good personalities, and such a utopian prince-type, where the hero came from royal family, ride a white beautiful horse, surrounded by all the finest things, or even though the hero was not come from royal family, usually they embodied flawless personalities. In this case, the main actors of Disney's story usually not really someone destined for failure, even if the heroes come from poor neighborhood, they will definitely rise up from the poverty because their heroic deeds and goodness. Thus a typical *picaresque*

hero will not be a favor in typical Disney character (McLeod 2016).

Frozen is a 2013 animated film created and produces at Walt Disney Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures. This film is inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "the Snow Queen". The plot of the story evolved among the story of a brave princess (Ana) who have a strange sister (Elsa), she has magic power so that she can alter everything into ice by her hands. Because of this matter, the conflict arouses and leads to Elsa run away from the kingdom because she feared that her power will destroy the kingdom.

Frozen is a fairy tale about true love, and how to reveal the hidden gem of true love itself. At first, the audience was led to a concept that in the end as any other fairy tales, the prince charming will save the day and became princess's true love. It turns out that the perception of true love itself evolved in the story, it is non-romantic, and not only about prince charming that will save the day, it's about sacrifice of sibling that want to keep her sister save. In the end of the story, Frozen offered the conclusion that not all of the prince charming is hero, that in reality so many people that has good appearance is rotten in the heart.

Machiavelli, in "the prince" proposes a non-sentimental, heartless, and practical look at what real man is (Mulki 2017). To him, a good ruler, in a sense, any kind of ruler, even the ruler of oneself must embodied certain qualities. His proposal on a real man perhaps little bit cruel, and in our nowadays society will be considered as a

villain, instead of a nice persona. Machiavelli says:

"A wise prince, then, is not troubled about a reproach for cruelty by which he keeps his subjects united and loyal because, giving a very few examples of cruelty, he is more merciful than those who, through too much mercy, let evils continue, from which result murders or plunder because the latter commonly harm a whole group, but those executions that come from the prince harm individuals only. The new prince - above all other princes - cannot escape being called cruel, since new governments abound in dangers." (Machiavelli 2014)

In Machiavellian thought it was obvious that a good person will always have a practical decision in their way of life. All form of actions needed to achieve the goal are permitted, including to do something that intertwined with our moral nowadays. Machiavellian characters are often considered as villain that will do whatever it takes to please them (Slotkin 2017). In relation to Disney's movies, the qualities of Machiavellian characters also appeared through various characters. Different types of Machiavellian traits varied in different characters from time to time.

This study try to reveal to what extent and how some characters in some Disney's story portrayed some Machiavellian manifestations through a descriptive qualitative method by comparing 2 characters from 2 movies namely Prince Hans of the Southern Isles, from Frozen, and Jafar from Arabian Nights.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Machiavellian Qualities

Many people are familiar with the unlikely thinking of the 16th century Florentine political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli (d. 1527). His influence is widespread even until now, and has been interpreted as “duplicity and bad faith”. To him, a weak personality rooted from the major involvement of the heart and emotion, one should be able to do whatever it takes to gain personal benefit and put his emotional feeling aside. For Machiavelli, since a good man must only think about themselves, the selfishness that a person had defined as the primary motivation for all human activity, selfishness is the core of human’s achievement. The success of human life is possible when a person will be able to diminish the entire barrier against his way, and thoroughly persistent to be a selfish person (Fuller 2016).

Machiavelli’s foundation of politics is straightforward: everyone in society acts primarily for personal gain, they think about themselves even in the society. A good man, to him, is based on his ability to think straightforward and practical for his personal gains. Even in nowadays society these notions seems so wrong because it is intertwined with ethics and moral, Machiavelli try to prove that for a good leader to became a good man and succeeded mastering this world, he had to either manipulate or frighten people into believing that their interests allied with his own (Hullung 2017).

Machiavelli also mentioned that it Is Better To Be feared Than loved (Machiavelli 2014):

“Since men love at their own pleasure and fear at the prince’s pleasure, a wise prince

must base himself upon that which is his, not upon that which is other men’s”

Machiavelli stated that a leader surest method to control people was by spreading fear, and frightening them to follow leader. Love and respect might work sometimes, but nothing much more effective than terror. To Machiavelli, his statement of choosing to be feared than loved, rooted from human’s basic instinct (Hullung 2017). When people afraid of something, they tend to follow their opponent practically, and it is an instant effect compared to love and affection. Affection from the people might work, but it takes time to settle and gain people’s heart.

To Strauss (Labrecque 2016) there are several qualities that indicate whether a character embodied Machiavellian manifestation:

- A. Being feared: to Machiavelli in 16th century, it is more preferable to be feared than loved. So those who embodied Machiavellian traits will try to make sure that the people feared on them instead of willingly love their ruler. A Machiavellian will make sure that they did all the things needed even it’s a cruel one to gain the control through fear.
- B. Virtue: The important character to have or pretend to have is virtue, as Machiavelli explained because with virtues, it is easier to gain the people’s heart. A good virtue limits the ability to rule, to show the good virtue in public is considered as symbol of weaknesses. The private life of ruler’s life is a key for a successful leadership
- C. Control and Manipulation: For Machiavelli, control and manipulation is the essence of ruling. In order to get the control, a ruler needs to do whatever it takes, including manipulating others. Although Machiavellians have typically been considered to be cold-blooded and

calculating, Dr Yan said. 'High Machiavellians generally like to feel in control and dislike showing weakness and might thus be prone to feeling distraught when someone else displays control over them (Palomäki, Yan et al. 2016).

- D. Intelligence: As a Machiavellian leader the most important thing is intelligence. To do whatever it takes to gain power and people's respect, Machiavellian leader needs an intelligent wit. Without intelligence a prince or king could not gain the support of his people, be able to find the perfect balance of fear or love, or know to use your own arms in battle.
- E. Machiavellian leaders are duplicitous, or simply says a contradictory double-ness of thought, speech, or action; especially, the belying of one's true intentions by deceptive words or action.
- F. Machiavellian leaders are narcissistic. They have excessive and exaggerated feelings of self-importance, though these feelings often masquerade as something nobler. Because their main intention is to get their only goal, so they tend to ignore others and only concern and love themselves.

Disney's Characters

Prince Hans of the Southern Isles, Frozen

Disney's latest film Frozen is a smash hit. Frozen is a 2013 American 3D computer-animated musical fantasy film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures. The film tells the story of the young Princess Anna, whose engagement to Prince Hans sets off a series of events that leads her on a quest with the ice carver Kristoff to find her estranged sister, Queen Elsa, who has inadvertently used her supernatural powers to trap the kingdom of Arendelle in an eternal winter. It has amassed a billion

dollars and counting at the box office, picked up the Oscar for best animated film, and currently sits on an 89% approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes. The story of Frozen, the movie, evolved in the search from the meaning of love and life Prince Hans actually a some kind of cynical twist of Prince charming in Disney's history. Most of the time Disney portray their hero as handsome, bravest, richest man, but such qualities didn't appear in this movie.

Hans is the main antagonist of the story although it didn't appear until the show is over. He is the youngest of the thirteen brothers and feels neglected amongst his brothers. Realizing that he will not get any chance to rule the throne of Southern Isles, Hans planned to marry royals' monarchy elsewhere, where he can get chance to get into the throne, eventually he set his target into Arendelle Kingdom. At first he planned to get Elsa, the older sister into his arms, but he realized that it's something impossible. He found out that her younger sister is easier to get, and fall for him eventually, so Hans set his goals to Anna. He has planned to kill Queen Elsa after his marriage to Anna, which would result him to becoming a king. In the end, all of his disguises is revealed, and he being jailed for his crimes.

Hans came to Arendelle for Elsa's coronation as a queen but not as a mere visitor. He is the youngest in his family, and will not be able to inherit the throne from his family side. Hungry for throne, he plan to take the throne from Elsa, but instead of trapping Elsa to his charm, he plan to attract Anna, Elsa's sister. Prince Hans is selfish and manipulative in nature. He is the youngest children from 13th princes in his family, and spent his life around ignorance

and abusive relationship. The constant belittling and ignorance was a breaking point for Hans to become a villainous character.

Like other villains, Hans is power-hungry, visiting Arandelle to rule the kingdom for whatever it takes (Sharif 2016). At first he intends to marry the throne to get his power over Arandelle, but it turns out that Elsa is not an option. He left for Anna, and tried to persuade her to take his side. When Anna is dying, he realized that he will not be able to trick her anymore, leaving her dying and leading Elsa to be prosecuted. He plays the roles of prince charming in front of the people to gain people trust.

Jafar from Arabian Nights

Jafar is a dark, thin character with British accent that became the villain in Arabian Night movie. He is plotting against the sultan, to get the throne. He enjoyed dark art and dressing up as toothless old men and giant snakes. Jafar tries to make his war to cave of wonders where he can get a magic lamp. He sends his men to collect magic lamp from the cave. In a nutshell, Alladin is the only person can enter the cave, using dark magic, jafar throw Aladdin to the dungeon, and jafar despise himself as an old prisoner to convince him to take the lamp. In the cave, alladin friended with a magic carpet that happened to save him from the collapsed rock. Jafar tries to kill Alladin to get the lamp, but Alladin managed to escape.

Not be able to possess the lamp, jafar uses his black magic to hypnotize the sultan to force the princess marrying him. (Quintana Crellis 2014). Meanwhile, Alladin disguise as Prince Ali tries come along to save Jasmine, but Jafar tries to murder him. Alladin uses his second wishes as the genie saves his life, and he tries to reveal jafar's plan to sultan and the princess. Jafar

revealed that Alladin put the magic lamp on his head and manage to take the magic lamp, turn the genie to be a bad one, and asked the genie to make him as a sultan. As the consequences, Alladin turn to be a peasant, sultan and princess became slaves, and Jafar Finally get the glory in ruling Arabian kingdom. After a while, Alladin tries to strike back to jafar by the help of magic carpet. Alladin finally get the magic lamp back, and for the last wishes he didn't ask for anything else, but the freedom of the genie.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, Prince Hans of the Southern Isles and Jafar from Arabian Nights characteristics will be explained and compared in regards to Machiavellian traits.

a. Prince Hans of the Southern Isles

"Oh, Anna, if only there were someone who loved you." Prince Hans on Frozen

In the story, Hans's greed for political power uses Anna's status and innocence to gain his position. In Machiavelli's terms, Hans is a prince who achieves principalities through wicked deeds. He pretend to love Anna dearly only to gain power and to become a prince. In relation to Machiavellian traits, the most obvious traits are Manipulation. Throughout the story he becomes a person that has double sided story. He manipulates everything to get his throne, even by playing "prince charming" for Anna. He smoothly manipulates Arandelle and its people, including Anna to achieve what he wants.

Another Machiavellian traits portrayed in Hans is that he actually lacked of virtue and this lead to his downfall. In The Prince, this character is described as someone without virtue, because "one cannot call it virtue to kill one's fellow

citizens” or “to betray one’s friends”(Machiavelli 2014). Back home, Hans is 13th in line to the throne and it is very hard to get to the throne at home.

Therefore in the end, he felt like he had eliminated all potential threats with Elsa locked up and Anna close to death because her heart hardened, he blatantly tells Anna during his betrayal scene that he knew he had to “marry into the throne somewhere” (Frozen) and that since no one was getting anywhere with Elsa and that she (Anna) was “so desperate for love”, he was just going to marry her and “stage a little accident for Elsa” later on. Thinking he has all the power, and betrays her for his own gain. Therefore in the end, the power of love banished all the wicked deeds he planned since the beginning. His action to banish all the potential threats also mentioned by Machiavelli as common efforts that a good leader must do. Machiavelli explains about Agathocles, who also happened to kill all the important senators. And to Machiavelli these tactics “may be used to acquire rule but not glory”(Lasswell 2017)

However this method is also what led him to his downfall. Because he lacks virtue, he lacks of ability to see situations and their effects from several perspectives. Machiavelli states that a successful prince would understand “how men are won or lost” (Machiavelli 63). If Hans understood how the people of Arendelle were, he would have made sure that Elsa and Anna were gone, before revealing his primary motives. He should’ve known that if either one of them were to survive, his power would be gone. Without any remaining friendships to rely upon, he loses everything and is back to where he started. Without virtue or fortune, the power he obtained through greed and wickedness is was quickly lost.

b. Jafar from Arabian Nights

“In the palace, right here, lived a wicked vizier; the advisor to Sultan Hamed. And this part-time magician, this amateur seer, wished his boss, the good sultan, and dead. He was charming and slick, but unspeakably sick, this despicable parasite. What a villain, boo hiss! Further proof, dears that this is another Arabian night...”

--Lyrics describing Jafar from a demo of "Arabian Nights".

Unlike Prince Hans, who look less evil than jafar, jafar vividly showed his motives. His physical appearance matches his personality perfectly. His skin is much darker than that of the protagonists in the film, and he is always seen wearing black clothing and headpieces, with red accents. In the movie, the Genie calls him a “tall, dark, sinister, ugly man,” showing how the darkness of Jafar correlates with personalities His appearance and clothing describes his devilish aura. Prince Hans from frozen despise himself as a nice guy that represent the typical hero in a fairy tale, but in the end, his perfect appearance didn’t guarantee a good heart, he was rotten inside.

In Machiavellian term, Prince Hans be able to maximize his potential in disguise and use his ability to manipulate. Meanwhile for Jafar, since the beginning, the portrayal of Jafar vividly showed that he is an evil person. He always wears black, has a darker skin than other characters, this is emphasize that his darker appearance also reflect his true self, so it didn’t take much to conclude he’s actually an evil. Jafar lack of ability to manipulate others and his stubbornness and arrogance lead him to his downfall.

In relation to Machiavellian terms, Jafar uses his power and control to fear people. After tricking the sultan to get the throne and finally got it, he turns to be cruel,

and didn't hesitate to hurt other people to keep him safe. He doesn't have one moment of hesitation or one ounce of sympathy for anyone he hurts. In fact, he seems to *enjoy* inflicting pain on others. It makes him happy. There are some proofs where he found it exciting to torture people: He gets Gazeem killed in the Cave of Wonders and just shrugs his shoulders, He's fine with manipulating—even hypnotizing—the Sultan to get what he wants, Using a homeless orphan boy to retrieve a lamp and then killing him is cool, too and Seizing power over an entire kingdom and then enslaving its former monarchs is all in a day's work for Jafar.

Throughout the story Jafar embodied a lot of Machiavellian traits, but the most occurred one is Control. Jafar knows that if he wants to gain the power, he needs to control the power no matter what it takes. But his excessive thirst for power that ultimately leads to Jafar's downfall; his quest to obtain control and authority causes him to act on impulse, which in turn leaves him vulnerable to manipulation. This weakness is the weapon that the protagonist used to defeat him. Jafar also very abusive towards his servant as evidenced by his interactions with Iago and, later, Abis Mal. One Machiavellian trait in relation to this is that he spread the fear to gain the power over some people to do what he actually wants.

The differences of the portrayal of Machiavellian traits in between Prince Hans and Jafar lays on their way to get the power, and the dominant traits they embodied. While Prince Hans is a master of disguise, Jafar is an open book. The manipulation became Jafar's enemy and lead to his downfall. Prince Hans also more narcissistic and play his disguise in a better way than Jafar, because throughout the story Jafar is

portrayed as an evil person while Prince Hans disguise as a prince charming.

Although both of them embodied different characteristics, but both of them are defeated for the same cause: their lack of virtue. They are defeated because both of them unable to have (or pretend to have) virtue. To Machiavelli, a leader that has no virtue is no leader at all. Their collapses are originated from their inability to see the condition and plan the smart movement to overcome the possible barriers. Their narcissistic elements that swayed them are one of the causes. Both of them are super confident to get what they wanted, and didn't think about what will happen next and the precautionary actions needed.

CONCLUSION

A typical Disney's movie will involve around magical fairy tales world, mostly about prince, and princesses. Most of the Disney story, since it was aimed for children, must include good moral value where most of the time, goodness will defeat dark side of the life. The hero in most of the Disney's story embodied good personalities, and such a utopian prince-type, where the hero came from royal family, ride a white beautiful horse, surrounded by all the finest things, or even though the hero wasn't come from royal family, usually they embodied flawless personalities. In this case, the main actors of Disney's story usually not really someone destined for failure, even if the heroes come from poor neighborhood, they will definitely rise up from the poverty because their heroic deeds and goodness.

From this study it can be concluded that Machiavellian traits also appeared in Disney's movies. In this case this study compares Hans, From Frozen and Jafar from Arabian Night. Both of the characters embodied some Machiavellian traits in their portrayal. In the story, Hans's greed for

political power uses Anna's status and innocence to gain his position. In Machiavelli's terms, Hans is a prince who achieves principalities through wicked deeds. He pretend to love Anna dearly only to gain power and to become a prince. In relation to Machiavellian traits, the most obvious traits are Manipulation. Throughout the story he becomes a person that has double sided story. He manipulates everything to get his throne, even by playing "prince charming" for Anna. He smoothly manipulates Arandele and its people, including Anna to achieve what he wants.

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