

## Unleashing the Darkness: Exploring Evil in George R.R.

### Martin's Fire and Blood

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إطلاق العنان للظلام: استكشاف الشر في "النار والدم" لجورج آر آر مارتن

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#### Abstract

George R.R. Martin's *Fire and Blood* (2018) takes readers on a riveting journey through the tumultuous history of Westeros, long before the events of *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Within the pages of this epic novel, the author expertly explores the concept of evil, portraying it in multifaceted and chilling ways. From power-hungry rulers to merciless assassins, *Fire and Blood* unearths the darkest corners of human nature and delves into the destructive consequences of evil acts. In this article, one can explore the various manifestations of evil in Martin's richly imagined world. This can be observed through the methodology of the study, which is reflected in the introduction section, literature review, conceptual frameworks, analysis, and finally, the conclusion that summarizes the findings. Key words: Fire & Blood; evil; Freud; Jung; George R.R. Martin

#### الخلاصة

يأخذ كتاب جورج آر آر مارتن "النار والدم" (٢٠١٨) القراء في رحلة مثيرة عبر تاريخ ويستروس المضطرب، قبل وقت طويل من أحداث "أغنية الجليد والنار". ضمن صفحات هذه الرواية الملحمية، يستكشف المؤلف بخبرة مفهوم الشر، ويصوره بطرق متعددة الأوجه تقشعر لها الأبدان. من الحكام المتعطشين للسلطة إلى القتلة الذين لا يرحمون، تكشف رواية النار والدم عن أحلك أركان الطبيعة البشرية وتعمق في العواقب المدمرة للأعمال الشريرة. في هذه المقالة، يمكن للمرء استكشاف المظاهر المختلفة للشر في عالم مارتن الغني بالتخيل. ويمكن ملاحظة ذلك من خلال منهجية الدراسة التي تتجلى في المقدمة، ومراجعة الأدبيات، والأطر المفاهيمية، والتحليل، وأخيرا الخاتمة التي تلخص النتائج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النار والدم؛ الشر؛ فرويد؛ جونج؛ جورج آر آر مارتن

#### INTRODUCTION

The complexity of human nature surpasses the simplistic notions of being solely good or bad, or engaging in strictly humane or inhumane actions. Within individuals, the concepts of 'good' and 'evil' are not fixed but rather malleable. People can possess a combination of both positive and negative traits. Even those who exhibit cruelty and brutality have the potential to be rehabilitated and eventually demonstrate qualities such as empathy and kindness. Moreover, rather than being inherent, the majority of cruel or brutal behavior can be attributed to external factors, such as a traumatic upbringing or social influence from family or peers (Taylor, 2012). In the context of morality, determining the boundaries between right and wrong becomes challenging when considering the existence of evil. The question arises: how do we discern what truly qualifies as an evil act? Life is multi-faceted, and individuals cannot be neatly categorized into groups of good or evil. The concept of evil is inherently ambiguous. Even criminals can possess virtuous qualities, just as honest individuals can harbor darker inclinations. What may be perceived as an evil act by one person could be interpreted quite differently by another. Good and evil are not static or steadfast attributes; instead, they are in a perpetual state of flux,

constantly exchanging positions. Additionally, the concept of evil within human nature and its various manifestations and reflections is extensively explored in George R. R. Martin's novel *Fire & Blood*. The novel provides a comprehensive account of the Targaryen family's rise to power and their ultimate descent into madness. From the brutal conquest of Westeros to the reigns of notable Targaryen rulers, such as Aegon the Conqueror and Maegor the Cruel, the novel weaves a tapestry of ambition, power struggles, and moral decay. As the Targaryens continue to hold onto their dragons, a symbol of their dominance and strength, their actions increasingly blur the line between good and evil. The book encompasses a blend of warfare, political maneuverings, acts of treachery, epic clashes involving dragons, and all the other elements that one would anticipate in a novel set during the medieval era. This book features kings from a single lineage, connected by blood, yet each possesses distinct characteristics and qualities. These individual traits contribute to the complexity of the book, making it challenging to read. Additionally, the narrative style resembles a collection of memoirs authored by Septons and maesters who served under these kings. Fans of "A Game of Thrones" will find great enjoyment in this tale. HBO has already presented season one of a television series titled "House of Dragon," adapted from this book.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

George R. R. Martin, also known as GRRM, is a prominent American author recognized for his popular series of epic fantasy novels called *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which has been adapted into the highly successful television series 'Game of Thrones' by HBO. With a writing focus on fantasy, horror, and science fiction, Martin has been dubbed "the American Tolkien" by Time journalist Lev Grossman (Young, 2019). He has received acknowledgment for his influential work and was featured in Time magazine's annual list of the world's 100 most influential individuals. Aside from being an accomplished novelist, Martin has also worked as a screenwriter and television producer on notable projects such as the CBS series 'Twilight Zone' and 'Beauty and the Beast'. Currently, he is actively engaged in the ongoing development of the 'Game of Thrones' franchise (Daffonchio, 2023). Born on September 20, 1948, in Bayonne, New Jersey, George R. R. Martin has gained international acclaim as a distinguished author in the genres of science fiction and fantasy. Growing up, he was the only son of Raymond Collins Martin, a longshoreman, and Margaret Brady Martin, and he has two sisters named Darleen Martin Lapinski and Janet Martin Patten. Martin received his early education at Jane Donohoe School and Marist High School before pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree (1970) and a Master of Science degree (1971) in Journalism from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois (Samuelson & Coker, 2013). During his childhood, Martin displayed a passion for storytelling, creating narratives and plays that he sold to fellow children in the neighborhood for a meager sum. As a teenager, he immersed himself in the world of comic books, amassing an impressive collection and even writing fiction stories for amateur comic fan magazines. After completing his university studies, Martin joined the Country Legal Assistance Foundation from 1972 to 1974, while also engaging in directing chess tournaments for the Continental Chess Association. In 1976, he ventured into teaching Journalism at Clarke College in Dubuque, Iowa, but ultimately left the profession in 1978. Throughout this time, he continued to write part-time. In 1975, Martin entered into marriage with Gale Burnick, but their union ended in 1979, prompting Martin's transition into becoming a full-time writer (Gresham, 2015). At the young age of 20, Martin achieved his first publication with the novel "The Hero" in 1970, marking the beginning of his successful writing career. He went on to create numerous fantasy works, including his renowned series *A Song of Ice and Fire* and *A Game of Thrones*, which propelled him to fame. Martin's talent extended beyond his acclaimed series, with his novels such as *Dying of the Light*, *The Ice Dragon*, and *Windhaven* garnering praise from fiction enthusiasts. Additionally, he contributed to the world of comic books as a writer and editor, notably with works like *Wild Cards*, *Sandkings*, and *The Hedge Knight*. Martin's popularity transcended borders, as his stories have been translated into various languages including Arabic, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Dutch, Japanese, Portuguese, Croatian, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Finnish, and Esperanto, attracting a broad international fan base (Samuelson & Coker, 2013). Beyond his achievements in publishing, Martin has made a significant impact in Hollywood. In 1986, he served as a story editor for the CBS Television series "Twilight Zone," followed by his role as the Executive Story Consultant for "Beauty and the Beast" in 1987. He continued his involvement with the show, becoming the producer in 1988 and eventually assuming the position of Co-Supervising Producer in 1989. Martin's talents extended to screenwriting as well, with his work on Columbia Pictures' "Doorways," where he also took on the role of Executive Producer during the project's filming between 1992 and 1993 (Hynes, 2017). George R.R. Martin has been recognized with numerous esteemed awards, highlighting his exceptional talents. He has

received the Locus Award an impressive six times, the Hugo Award three times, and the Nebula Award twice. In addition to these accolades, Martin's achievements include the Daikon, Balrog, Gigamesh, Daedelus, Bram Stoker, and World Fantasy awards. Currently, Martin is an esteemed member of both the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America and the Writers' Guild of America, West. He currently resides in Santa Fe, New Mexico (Young, 2019). Here is a schedule showcasing some of Martin's notable works and their respective awards:

- Locus Award:
- 6-time winner (for various works)
- Hugo Award:
- 3-time winner (for various works)
- Nebula Award:
- 2-time winner (for various works)
- Additional Awards:
- Daikon Award
- Balrog Award
- Gigamesh Award
- Daedelus Award
- Bram Stoker Award
- World Fantasy Award

Though it is widely acknowledged that George R. R. Martin is a renowned writer, there have been both positive and negative criticisms of his works. As a contemporary author known for his fantasy and epic storytelling, Martin is often compared to J. R. R. Tolkien, the creator of the imaginative worlds in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. According to Löchel (2023), one viewpoint suggests that Martin's writing style differs significantly from Tolkien's classical romantic approach. Many individuals believe this divergence is a key factor in considering Martin to be inferior to Tolkien. Martin is often criticized for extensively incorporating elements from real-world history, mythology, and the works of other fiction writers into his storytelling. In 2012, an article titled "Popularizing Epic Narrative in George R.R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones*" by Ida Rochani Adi indirectly suggested that the fame and success of Martin's works, particularly the novel *A Game of Thrones*, can be attributed to its adaptation into an HBO television series. The article implies that modern audiences are more inclined towards cinema and television rather than reading books. It argues that the popularity of *A Game of Thrones* is not solely derived from its epic or fantasy elements, but rather from its television adaptation. On a different note, Garulo (2021) presents a contrasting viewpoint regarding the novel. According to Garulo, *A Game of Thrones* can be considered as one of the greatest television shows ever produced, if not the absolute best. It has garnered a massive viewership and received high acclaim from experts worldwide. However, Hirsso (2015), in the introduction of their master's thesis, argues that Martin's fantasy novels portray complex characters with realistic motivations, virtues, and vices. The use of magic and supernatural elements is relatively restrained compared to many other works in the genre. Martin's depiction of the medieval world offers a realistic and often grim perspective on life. Additionally, George R.R. Martin as a controversial writer, receives praise for his approach to writing fantasy novels. Selling (2004) highlights that Martin's novels tackle the darker aspects of the depicted times, such as social inequality, the oppression of women, power struggles among the aristocracy, the brutality of war, and the contrast between chivalric ideals and reality. Surprisingly, magic and fantastical elements have a relatively minor role in the novels, although their significance increases as the series progresses. Some of these elements are seamlessly integrated into the natural fabric of the world. For instance, in Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire*, characters accept as commonplace the unpredictable duration of each season and the existence of dragons, which are now extinct. Other elements are portrayed as rare, enigmatic, and beyond the characters' comprehension. Furthermore, O'Leary (2015) argues that while Martin's novels fall within the fantasy genre, they vividly depict elements of reality: "in reading Martin's novels, we don't escape from reality into some irrational fantasy; rather, we move from the mundane shell of reality into the inner core of its liveliness, to a world of invention and image" (p.8). In conclusion, George R.R. Martin's impact as a writer is undeniable. His popular series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, along with its television adaptation 'Game of Thrones', have captivated audiences worldwide. Martin's writing spans genres, incorporating elements of fantasy, horror, and science fiction, and his ability to create morally ambiguous characters with realistic motivations has garnered praise. While Martin has faced criticism for deviating from the classical romantic style of writers like

J.R.R. Tolkien, his unique approach and incorporation of real-world history and mythology have also been celebrated. With numerous prestigious awards to his name and a dedicated fan base, Martin's contributions to the literary and television industries are significant. Despite controversies and diverse opinions surrounding his work, there is no denying the lasting impact of George R.R. Martin's storytelling.

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself. He is the great danger, and we are pitifully unaware of it. We know nothing of man, far too little. His psyche should be studied, because we are the origin of all coming evil. (Jung, 1977, p. 436) The concept of the 'evil of human nature' refers to the idea that human beings possess an inherent capacity for malevolence, selfishness, and destructive behavior. It suggests that there are inherent flaws within human beings that can lead them to act in harmful or morally wrong ways. Throughout history, there have been numerous examples that seem to support the notion of the evil of human nature. Instances of violence, greed, oppression, and cruelty can be found across different cultures and time periods. War, genocide, crimes, and acts of terrorism are often cited as evidence of humanity's capacity for evil (Vanden Auweele, 2019) However, it is important to note that this perspective does not encompass the entirety of human nature. Humans also possess positive traits such as empathy, compassion, creativity, and the ability to cooperate and build communities. The duality of human nature encompasses both the potential for good and evil (Klubertanz, 2022) The belief in the evil of human nature has been debated by philosophers, psychologists, and social scientists for centuries. Some argue that human behavior is shaped by external factors such as societal influences, upbringing, and environmental conditions, suggesting that individuals are not inherently evil but can be driven to commit harmful acts under certain circumstances. Others contend that there are innate aspects of human nature that predispose individuals towards negative behavior. On the other hand, according to the Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung (1995), evil is a state of mind in which an idea or image from the unconscious takes control of an individual's ego and conscious identity, leading to psychotic inflation, depression, or even violence. Jung argues that evil is not inherent in nature, whether physical, psychological, or metaphysical, but rather a product of human thought. Evil arises when someone passes judgment on an act or thought, creating a distinction between good and evil. Before that judgment, only the "raw fact" exists, devoid of ethical considerations. In addition, Jung (2020) proposed that each person has an aspect within their personality that they choose to reject and repress—a part of themselves that they dislike or believe society would find unacceptable. This "beast within" is pushed into the unconscious. However, this does not necessarily imply that individuals are inherently evil, as thoughts differ from actions. Evil thoughts remain as such unless individuals feel compelled to act upon them. The question then arises: What motivates people to carry out evil acts? What kinds of personalities do they have? Some individuals find pleasure in committing evil acts, and their psyche and impulse control come into question. Those who engage in evil actions often exhibit a toxic combination of narcissism (self-centeredness, excessive need for admiration, and a sense of entitlement) and psychopathy (manipulativeness, vindictiveness, and callous insensitivity to others' feelings). These personality traits increase the likelihood of engaging in evil behavior (Barry, 2019) Consequently, the source of evil has been a central question among specialists, with critics and scholars offering varying perspectives on this phenomenon. Kapoor and Kaufman (2022) proposed four major root causes or reasons that can lead individuals to engage in actions perceived as evil or inhuman. These factors can influence otherwise ordinary and well-intentioned people, either individually or in combination:

1. The desire for material gain: Some individuals may commit evil acts driven by a simple longing for material wealth or personal gain.
2. Threatened egotism: When individuals feel their ego or self-esteem is threatened, they may act in ways that others perceive as evil to protect or assert themselves.
3. Idealism: Noble ends are sometimes used to justify the use of violent or extreme means, leading individuals to commit acts that others deem as evil.
4. The pursuit of sadistic pleasure: While only a small percentage of perpetrators, around 5 or 6 percent, derive enjoyment from causing harm, some individuals engage in evil acts driven by a desire for sadistic pleasure. While a small minority with antisocial personality traits, including psychopaths, contribute disproportionately to violence and crime in society, impulsive acts of violence are also prevalent. Many individuals who commit impulsive acts of violence may experience regret or shame afterward. Human interpersonal violence often arises from impulsive, fearful, insecure, passionate, vengeful, or misguided actions. Reactive aggression, driven by immediate reactions, plays a significant role in violence, while premeditated, calculated, or predatory violence

(proactive aggression) is less common. Additionally, group violence is influenced by factors such as peer pressure and social influence. Overall, understanding the source of evil involves considering a range of factors that can influence individuals' actions, from personal motivations to societal pressures and influences. It is widely acknowledged that individuals who engage in evil actions often do not perceive themselves as evil. They tend to downplay the harmful consequences of their behavior or rationalize their actions, even if driven by motives such as material gain or threatened egotism. They may view their actions as less significant than the impact experienced by their victims, or they might believe that the victims provoked or deserved the harm inflicted upon them (Baumeister & Bushman, 2020). Therefore, Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, introduced the concept of the "death instinct" as a fundamental biological drive, contrasting the previously established "life- and ego-instincts." Over time, Freud's outlook on the human condition grew more pessimistic. He posited that human beings possess two primary drives, namely sex and aggression, which he concluded later in his career. In his work *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1991), Freud identified fundamental tensions between civilization and the individual, where conflicts arise from the individual's pursuit of instinctual freedom and society's demand for conformity and repression of instincts. Freud's theory suggests that humans have inherent instincts, including sexual and aggressive tendencies, which, when obstructed, can transform into a general inclination towards aggression and destruction towards others and society as a whole. However, there is a contrasting perspective presented by Steven Pinker in his influential work *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (2012). Pinker provides extensive data demonstrating a significant decline in violence over the past centuries. Factors such as the establishment of centralized societal control, improved standards of living, literacy, education, employment, health, economic interdependence, and the empowerment of women have contributed to this decline. Norms of self-control and an increased ability to understand different perspectives have also played a role. Pinker's work highlights the positive trends towards less violence and greater interdependent cooperation within and between human societies. In summary, individuals who engage in harmful actions often believe their actions align with what they perceive as good or justified. The influences of biological and cultural evolution have contributed to the restraint of violence and the promotion of cooperation and compassion. Throughout history, there has been an uneven but discernible trend towards decreased violence and increased interdependence and cooperation among human societies. In conclusion, the concept of the 'evil of human nature' suggests that human beings have an inherent capacity for malevolence and destructive behavior. While there are numerous examples throughout history that seem to support this notion, it is important to acknowledge that human nature is not solely defined by evil. Humans also possess positive traits such as empathy, compassion, and the ability to cooperate. The debate surrounding the evil of human nature has been ongoing, with some arguing that external factors shape human behavior, while others believe in innate aspects predisposing individuals to negative behavior. Carl Jung proposed that evil arises from the dominance of certain ideas or images in the unconscious mind, leading to insanity or violence. The personalities of those who commit evil acts often exhibit narcissistic and psychopathic traits. The source of evil has been explored by various scholars, with causes ranging from material gain and threatened egotism to idealism and sadistic pleasure. It is worth noting that individuals who do evil acts often rationalize their behavior or minimize its impact. Sigmund Freud's theory highlighted the tension between civilization and individual instincts, particularly the drives for sex and aggression. However, Steven Pinker's research revealed a decline in violence over time, influenced by factors such as centralized societal control, improved living standards, education, and the empowerment of women. In the long view of history, there has been a trend toward less violence and greater cooperation, indicating that human nature is not solely defined by evil.

#### ANALYSIS

Centuries preceding the narrative of *A Game of Thrones* (1996), House Targaryen, the sole remaining family of dragonlords after the cataclysmic Doom of Valyria, settled on Dragonstone. *Fire and Blood* (2018) commences their story with the renowned Aegon the Conqueror, the first Targaryen, who crafted the legendary Iron Throne. The book then chronicles the subsequent Targaryen generations as they struggled to maintain their grip on this iconic seat of power, culminating in a devastating civil war that threatened to shatter their dynasty. The first thing to notice is the title itself, "Fire & Blood," which suggests and foreshadows the particular tone of the novel. It implies that all the events and incidents will revolve around the fiery power of dragons and the bloody conflicts involving people. This thematic perspective is reiterated multiple times throughout the book: "but we will come again, Princess, and the next time we shall come with fire and blood" (2018, p.23) (italics mine). From the very first page of the novel, readers can immediately sense the epic nature of the fantasy world. It encompasses

thrilling battles, tragic deaths, joyous births, majestic dragons, complex love stories, treacherous betrayals, well-defined protagonists and antagonists, mystical witchcraft, power struggles for the throne, and an unrelenting thirst for power. The novel adopts the format of a scholarly treatise authored by Archmaester Gyldayn, a historian within the fictional world of *A Song of Ice and Fire* (McNutt, 2022). Within this framework, Gyldayn references a range of fictional primary sources to depict the historical events he describes. However, these sources often present conflicting accounts, mirroring the historiographical practices of the medieval era. Consequently, Gyldayn emerges as an unreliable narrator from the reader's perspective (Goslin, 2022). To facilitate a smoother analysis of the novel, it is essential to break down the explanation into the following sections:

### 1- THE CORRUPTION OF POWER

One of the central themes explored in *Fire and Blood* is the corrupting nature of power. Martin presents numerous instances where Targaryen rulers succumb to the allure of their authority, leading to devastating consequences for both themselves and the realm they govern. The novel emphasizes the moral dilemma faced by rulers, as the pursuit of power often requires ruthless decisions that can inflict immense suffering upon their subjects. From the first conquests, the sense of inhumanity becomes evident through the actions of Aegon's soldiers, as depicted in the following passage: "attackers slew Lord Oakheart and most of the wedding guests, then made the bride look on as they gelded her husband. Afterward they took turns raping Lady Alys and her handmaids, then carried them off and sold them to a Myrish slaver" (p.37). This behavior aligns with Freud's perspective, wherein he posited that individuals can commit unspeakable acts driven by their sexual desires. Within the novel, this instinctual drive impels men to behave without thought or mercy, akin to animals. The act of rape is analyzed as a manifestation of a man's need to demonstrate his (deformed) masculinity in the presence of others. Men often feel compelled to prove their ability to engage in sexual intercourse, as if it were a defining characteristic of their manhood, and without it, they perceive themselves as lacking masculinity. This theme resonates with Ernest Hemingway's modern novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), where the protagonist, Jake Barnes, experiences a loss of sexual function due to a wartime injury, leading him to feel emasculated and abandoned by his girlfriend. This argument, in some way, supports Freud's assertion regarding the significance of the sex drive and its potential consequences in giving rise to inhumane acts.

### 2- BLOODSHED AND BETRAYAL

Martin's narrative is replete with treachery, revealing the darkness that lurks within the hearts of men and women alike. In *Fire and Blood*, one witnesses assassinations, poisonings, and betrayals carried out by characters consumed by their own personal agendas. The first chapter of the novel, titled "Aegon's Conquest," signifies the commencement of the Targaryens' history of bloodshed. Aegon, accompanied by his two sisters/wives Visenya on Vhagar and Rhaenys on Meraxes, rode the mighty Balerion dragon to conquer the seven kingdoms<sup>1</sup>. Aegon employed a strategy of intimidation, often giving the kings of these kingdoms the ultimatum to yield by surrendering their wealth and lands, or else he would unleash his dragon's fiery wrath. As he famously declared, "Yield now, and your sons will live to rule after you. I have eight thousand men outside your walls" (p.13). An analysis of this conquest suggests that Aegon's motives were driven by his desire for material wealth and his egoistic satisfaction in becoming the first man to conquer the seven kingdoms. In Freudian terms, this act can be attributed to Aegon's need for aggression and violence, which aligns with his instinct for life, as theorized by Freud. Moreover, the queens Visenya and Rhaenys played pivotal roles in Aegon's conquest. These two women were both sisters and wives to King Aegon. It is important to note that the Targaryen tradition involved marriages between siblings and other close relatives to maintain the purity of their dragon bloodline, as stated: "The blood of the dragon must remain pure" (p.53). This practice originated from Old Valyria, as explained: "The traditions amongst the Targaryens had always been to marry kin to kin. Wedding brother to sister was thought to be ideal. Failing that, a girl might wed an uncle, a cousin, or a nephew, a boy cousin, aunt, or niece" (p.53). Although Visenya and Rhaenys were sisters, they possessed distinct personalities. Queen Visenya was known for her strength, fearlessness, cruelty, ruthlessness, seriousness, sternness, and occasional acts of forgiveness. Rumors even circulated that she dabbled in poisons and dark sorceries (p.9). In contrast, her sister Rhaenys was described as gentle-tempered, kind-hearted, and a lover of music. Each of these women gave birth to a son—Aenys, the eldest, being the son of Rhaenys, and Maegor, the son of Visenya. Betrayal is a recurrent theme throughout the novel. In almost every generation, someone betrays someone else. For example, later in the book, King Aegon II was found poisoned while sitting on the throne: "There was blood upon his lips,...Elsewise he might have been sleeping" (p.566). It is said that Aegon II was killed by one of his wives or

one of his Kingsguards. His death remains a mystery, but it is clear that it was a betrayal carried out by someone close to him. This same king, in his glorious days, betrayed and killed his sister to take the throne.

### 3- THE MADNESS WITHIN

The Targaryens' lineage is marred by a recurring madness known as the Targaryen "madness." This hereditary affliction serves as a potent catalyst for evil, as the novel depicts how the gradual deterioration of a ruler's mental state can lead to sadistic and irrational behavior. From the infamous Mad King Aerys II to Maegor the Cruel, the Targaryen madness serves as a stark reminder that evil can emerge even from those born into positions of power and privilege. The most inhumane acts appeared during the reign of King Maegor, the second son of King Aegon and Queen Visenya. Maegor was called as the Cruel and the Kinslayer. In his childhood, at the age of thirteen, he raped a ten-year-old girl because he wanted to have a son. After ascending to the throne, he dedicated his days to conquering and killing people, with or without reason. The Faith (or religious men) referred to him as "the abomination and his whores" (p.81). They objected to his choice of marriage, leading him to 'remove Septon Wat the Hewer's limbs with the giant's own axe, but ordered his maesters to keep the man alive 'so he might attend my wedding" (p.80). Maegor frequently rode his father's dragon, Balerion, wreaking havoc across the lands, burning and killing the likes of the Falwells, the Brooms, the Lorches, and other 'pious lords' who defied him, along with women and children (p.84) Maegor the Cruel committed the most horrific acts of humanity when he killed his fifteen-year-old nephew and sent the remains to his mother. The nephew was second in line to the throne after King Aenys, as the succession follows the father-to-son lineage rather than from the king to his brother. Therefore, when King Aenys died, it was supposed to be his son's turn to rule. However, Maegor, the brother, killed his nephew and seized power through bloodshed and violence. But that wasn't enough for him. Maegor married three wives, with the last being a common witch, in an attempt to produce a male heir. Unfortunately, each of his wives gave birth to sick and unnatural children who died shortly after birth. Maegor blamed his wives for this misfortune and proceeded to kill them in the most brutal ways imaginable. His first wife was the queen and also the wife of his brother. After her death, Maegor ordered that "the queen's body be cut into seven parts, which were then mounted on spikes above the city's seven gates, where they remained until they rotted" (p.94). As for his second wife, it is said that he personally slit her throat, cut out her heart with his dragon, and fed it to his dogs (p.102). Later, it was discovered that his last wife, the witch, was responsible for the deformities in his children, and it was because of her that King Maegor failed to produce a healthy male heir. After ruling for six years, Maegor died without leaving any offspring from his own body. His corpse was burned in the Red Keep yard, leaving no heir to succeed him. Psychologically speaking, Maegor exemplifies the typical traits of narcissism and psychopathy. He was a man willing to commit any despicable act in order to attain pleasure and wealth. His strong desires for sex and aggression were evident in his fear of relinquishing power, which led him to perpetrate inhumane acts against his own blood, his nephew, in his quest for dominance. His treatment of his wives further reveals his need to establish a sense of egotism, as his inability to father a son left him feeling inadequate compared to other men. Maegor's actions can be seen as a manifestation of the stereotypes discussed by Freud and Jung in their theories regarding the existence of evil within human nature. After the bloody reign of Maegor, the realm experienced a period of peace and happiness during the rule of King Jaehaerys I and his wife/sister, Queen Alyssane. This king was the son of the deceased nephew. King Jaehaerys I and Queen Alyssane governed the seven kingdoms with kindness and justice. Even the queen tried to cancel the law which provides the lords of taking the virginity of any new wed woman that was called "the right of the first night" (p.269). The queen gave birth to eleven children with Jaehaerys, some of whom died at a young age, while others married within the family. Each child had a dragon, which led to the Targaryen rule reaching its peak after Aegon the Conqueror. However, the next generation faced some challenges regarding the succession to the throne. Eventually, death and bloodshed resurfaced with the rule of Viserys, the grandson.

4- Moral Ambiguity: *Fire and Blood* challenges the notion of clear-cut morality by presenting characters whose actions are often driven by personal agendas, political maneuvering, or their own warped sense of righteousness. Martin skillfully blurs the lines between heroes and villains, forcing readers to question their own ethical judgments. The novel reminds the reader that good and evil are not fixed concepts but fluid notions influenced by perspective, circumstance, and the choices individuals make. The moral ambiguity arises from the fact that the savage and barbaric methods of killing people were considered almost natural during that time; for example, one of the kingsguard had a fight with Lord Qoherys of Harrenhal, consequently, "The brigands pulled his lordship from his bed and dragged him to the castle godswood, where Harren sliced off his genitals and fed

them to a dog" (p.62). This behavior indicates that the idea of torture and the way of killing are already in the unconscious of the kingsguard. Then this idea is translated into action that appears in this animalistic and nonhuman way to another human. This links to Carl Jung's theory of the source of evil. The same act is repeated when the Vulture King "sliced off Dondarrion's nose before putting Blackhaven to the torch and marching away" (p. 64). The time of the events of the novel is the medieval age, and in this time even the concept of gift is a celebration of a nonhuman act such as the beheading of a particular foe and presenting the head to the king. This shows that the mentality of people at that time was bestial and evil. It is already there since their childhood taught them to live in this frame of mind. The competence to know what is wrong and right is stored to accept such behaviors. As it has been found throughout history, the struggle between the men of religion and the king in this novel, religion is referred to as Faith, and the priests as Septons. The relationship is complex, but the Faiths were never able to rebel against the king because of his choice of wives. According to the Faiths, such union between brother and sister is not acceptable, but King Aegon was strong enough to impose his opinion. This was seen one time when a Septon called Murmison was passing the city, and the king ordered his men to "hacked him to pieces with their axes" (p. 72). Therefore, all the following kings of the Targaryens tried to have an alliance with the Septons, present at least one seat of the court to a Septon, and be the king's advisor. Such struggle was based on establishing power, and eventually the most animalistic acts preserved the power for its holder.

#### 5- CONSEQUENCES AND REDEMPTION

While evil may seem prevalent throughout the pages of Fire and Blood, Martin also explores the lasting consequences of these actions. Characters pay the price for their cruelty, and the impact of their deeds reverberates through generations. The novel reveals that redemption is possible, albeit often accompanied by sacrifice and personal growth. In this complex world, characters grapple with their past choices, striving to find a path toward redemption or embracing the darkness within King Viserys announced his daughter Rhaenyra as his chosen successor, overlooking his mature brother Daemon. This decision sparked a civil war within House Targaryen. The situation worsened when the king married Alicent Hightower, the daughter of his Hand, Otto Hightower. Alicent bore the king new sons, leading to a dispute over the succession: should it pass to the eldest daughter, Rhaenyra, or to the son, Aegon II? As the novel progressed through various passages and chapters, it delved into the darkest depths of inhumanity when King Viserys passed away, triggering a fierce struggle for the throne. It is crucial to the plot to note that later in her life, Rhaenyra married her uncle Daemon and had numerous children with him, as well as from their previous marriages. The climax of the story was reached during the Dance of the Dragons, a conflict that emerged with two branches of the same family vying for the throne, both possessing dragons. Queen Alicent sided with her teenage sons in their bid for the throne, despite it being rightfully called for Rhaenyra. The intense animosity between the "blacks" (Rhaenyra and Daemon) and the "greens" (Alicent, her father, and sons) resulted in the kingdom's destruction. After the death of King Viserys, Alicent seized the opportunity to crown her elder son, Aegon II, taking advantage of Rhaenyra's absence from Kingslanding. Making matters worse, Aemond, the second son of Alicent, killed one of Rhaenyra's sons. When Daemon and his wife received news of this, they mounted their dragons and launched attacks in pursuit of their rightful claim to the kingdom and revenge. The ensuing conflict became known as the Dance of the Dragons, characterized by the fiery battles between the two dragon-riding families. Many significant events occurred, resulting in numerous deaths and inciting the people to turn against the Targaryens. Daemon himself perished after slaying Aemond. Aegon II was burned and injured deeply, but he was able to kill his sister Rhaenyra in front of her last child; King Aegon II delivered his half-sister to his dragon, Sunfyre..., until Broom pricked the queen's breast with his dagger. The smell of the blood roused the dragon, who sniffed at Her Grace, then bathed her a blast of flame... Rhaenyra Targaryen had time to raise her head toward the sky and shriek out one last curse upon her half-brother before Sunfyre's jaws closed around her, tearing off her arm and shoulder. (p.546) All of these events unfolded before the eyes of Aegon III, who would eventually ascend to the throne. Septons Eustace was there, and he said that the dragon devoured the queen in six bites, leaving only her left leg (p.246). This bestial act reflects the evil done upon the throne. Aegon II, driven by his thirst for power, resorted to killing his sister and her children to secure the throne. His fear of not attaining kingship fueled these heinous acts. Additionally, Queen Alicent Hightower bears the responsibility for instilling notions of revenge, hatred, and self-centered ambition in the minds of her children. In her relentless pursuit of power, Queen Alicent's actions exemplify the extent to which individuals are willing to go to safeguard their own interests, regardless of the harm inflicted on others. Her behavior, along with that of her



children, aligns with concepts rooted in the subconscious, as explored by Jung. It was through the influence of Queen Alicent and his grandfather that Aegon II was misled into orchestrating the destruction of his half-sister.

Fear, hatred, revenge, and the lust for power destroyed the Targaryen family. Even the public turned against them. For example, one of Rhaenyra's sons was killed bestially by the people in the street, who "began ripping at his body. Both of his hands were cut off, so the scum of the street might claim the rings on his fingers. The prince's right foot was hacked through at the ankle, and a butcher's apprentice was sawing at his neck to claim his head." (p.517). People reacted out of revenge for the killing and burning they faced from the Targaryens. In concluding the analysis, *Fire and Blood*, a historical account of House Targaryen, delves into the corrupting nature of power, the themes of bloodshed and betrayal, the darkness of madness, the moral ambiguity of characters, and the consequences of their actions. George R.R. Martin skillfully explores the complex and intricate world of Westeros, challenging readers' notions of morality and blurring the lines between heroes and villains. Throughout the novel, the Targaryens' pursuit of power leads to devastating consequences, showcasing the inhumanity and brutality that can arise from the desire for dominance. Characters like Aegon the Conqueror and Maegor the Cruel exemplify the depths of depravity one can sink to in the quest for power, reflecting psychological theories such as Freud's views on the sex drive and Jung's theories on evil. The narrative also highlights the lasting impact of these actions, with consequences reverberating through generations and causing rifts within the Targaryen dynasty. However, amidst the darkness, the novel also explores the possibilities of redemption, although it often comes at great cost and requires personal growth and sacrifice. *Fire and Blood* serves as a reminder that good and evil are not fixed concepts, but fluid notions influenced by perspective, circumstance, and individual choices. The tale of House Targaryen serves as a cautionary tale, showcasing the destructive consequences of power, the human capacity for cruelty, and the potential for redemption amidst the darkness.

## CONCLUSION

In *Fire and Blood*, George R.R. Martin showcases the complexity and destructive nature of evil in a world teeming with political intrigue, bloodshed, and the allure of power. Through a cast of morally flawed characters, he crafts a compelling narrative that explores the depths to which individuals can descend when driven by their ambitions, desires, and fears. The novel serves as a cautionary tale, reminding us of the consequences that arise when evil is left unchecked. As readers, we are confronted with the chilling realization that evil can be found not only in the extraordinary but also within the recesses of our own hearts. Accordingly, we all should accept that evil part within ourselves but it is our responsibility how to deal with this part. It is the morality and personal experiences that shape the concept and principles of the individual. Thus, it is significant to mention that though all people have bad or evil side but it is not an excuse to behave in nonhuman manner. The 707-page novel is replete with various depictions of the dark side of human nature. These inhumane behaviors serve as the conceptual framework of this paper. It aims to illustrate that individuals, regardless of their social background or gender, are capable of committing amoral and inhuman acts if sufficiently motivated. Thus, causing harm to others becomes a matter of choice. While all people possess the potential for evil within themselves, it is their actions that ultimately determine the outcomes and consequences. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that even if one were to exclude the concept of evil from the novel, it remains rich with ideas such as feminism and the empowerment of women. Numerous queens play significant roles throughout the events of the novel, some of whom are instrumental in reshaping the course of history, from the first queen, Visenya, to the last queen, Daenaera. Additionally, the novel delves into fantastical elements, featuring dragons, witches, and other seemingly unreal characteristics that challenge the modern mind. Mystery and unanswered questions abound, inviting deeper analysis and justifications. Political manipulation is also a prominent theme, reflecting the intricate game of politics. The sense of slavery and social distinction is poignantly expressed within the narrative. It is worth noting that comprehending the novel's themes and concepts depends on the perspective of the reader; each individual may interpret the book in their own unique way. Consequently, any literary scholar or student will find George R.R. Martin's world fascinating enough to immerse themselves in its imaginative realm.

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<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy to mention that there are seventeen dragons featured in the novel, all of which were exclusive to the Targaryen family. In certain instances, multiple lords would ride the same dragon if the previous rider had perished, while some dragons outright rejected being ridden. The initial dragons introduced in the book were Balerion, Vhagar, and Meraxes.