

Masteroppgave

The Life of Tom Marvolo Riddle aka Lord Voldemort

– A Study of the Origin of Evil and How It Is Portrayed in Fantasy.

Av

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Masteroppgaven er gjennomført som et ledd i utdanningen ved Universitetet i Agder og er godkjent som sådan. Denne godkjenningen innebærer ikke at universitetet inntår for de metoder som er anvendt og de konklusjoner som er trukket.

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“Det er i motbakke det går oppover...”

I have found that indeed when everything seems to be a struggle one must continue to push forward and not give up as it will in the end be rewarding.

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A Word of Advice

It is important to mention that if you intend to read the Harry Potter series but have not done so yet, or if you have just begun reading the series, a warning ought to be given as this thesis can be considered a spoiler. I hope however, that this may prove to be an interesting reading nonetheless.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
A Word of Advice	2
Introduction	5
Brief Account of the Fantasy Literature	6
The Problem of Evil and the Free Will of Man	10
Free Will	10
The Problem of Evil	14
Brief Introduction of the Author J. K. Rowling	20
The Presence of Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter Books	22
The Harry Potter Series	22
<i>Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone</i>	23
<i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Mystery</i>	24
<i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i>	25
<i>Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire</i>	26
<i>Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix</i>	28
<i>Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince</i>	30
<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows</i>	31
Tom Marvolo Riddle aka Lord Voldemort	33
The Life of Tom Marvolo Riddle	33
The Transformation Into Lord Voldemort	35
The Rise and Fall of Lord Voldemort	41
Evil in Fiction	44
An Analysis of Lord Voldemort	45
A Comparison – Lord Voldemort and Other Fictional Characters	51
Lord Voldemort <i>versus</i> Darth Vader	51
Lord Voldemort <i>versus</i> Sauron	54
Lord Voldemort <i>versus</i> Dr Faustus	56

Lord Voldemort – an Evil Being?	58
Summing Up	59
Sources	64

Introduction

Fantasy fiction has existed for a very long time, but its popularity has been rather varied. The modern sense of fantasy fiction however, has increased, much due to the works of authors such as J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Philip Pullman, Robert Jordan and J. K. Rowling, whose works I intend to delve deeper into.

J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series revolve around the conflict of good and evil. There are several examples of goodness and acts of evil portrayed in these books. As we are told much about the good side in plain text, I wish to bring more focus on the subject of evil and the use of evil in fantasy literature. The aspect of evil tends to fascinate and intrigue, but what is the origin of evil and how is it defined? There are many things that can be described as bad but not necessarily evil, so what recognizes evil?

The main evil character in the Harry Potter novels is Lord Voldemort. He can be described as evil incarnate, but how does one become personified evil? Does this happen through the influence of one's surroundings, or is it already present at birth? These are some of the questions I hope to find answers to through the Harry Potter novels and with the aid of works from other authors such as Tolkien's *the Lord of the Rings*. I also intend to take the thematic of the free will and the problem of evil into account as I try to discover the origin of Lord Voldemort's path to evil. There will also be references to the Christian God and in doing so I will also refer to God by the masculine pronouns (such as He, Him, His) for convenience sake. I do not find it necessary to bring about the gender of God, nor use both gender for the reader to choose.

I also wish to inform that I intend to use and quote from the Harry Potter series and *the Lord of the Rings*, and in doing so I will use the following short terms; *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* will be referred to as Stone, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* as Chamber, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* as Azkaban, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* as Goblet, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* as Order, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* as Half-Blood, and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* as Hallows, whereas the *Lord of the Rings* will be shortened to LOTR.

Brief Account of the Fantasy Literature

The elements of mystique, magic and the supernatural have been part of literature from its very beginning. The fantasy literature can be described as fiction that uses magic and supernatural events and beings. The setting can take place in a fantasy world as well as in the real world or even switch from one world to another. If it is set in the real world, it is hidden from those that do not concern that particular world.

The origin of fantasy literature is uncertain, but it may have started with the epic poem *Epic of Gilgamesh* from Babylonia, which is also among the earliest known literary works. Other works that ought to be mentioned are *The Odyssey*, *Beowulf* and the *Divine Comedy*. *The Odyssey*, by Homer, is a classical account of a hero that has to go through several trials in order to reach his goal, his paradise. The story about Odysseus' great achievements in this epic saga, where he uses his wit and not much violence to get back to his true love has inspired many written works. *Beowulf* is another epic poem concerning a hero in a quest to prove his strength and valour. Whereas the *Divine Comedy*, which has been inspired by amongst others, *the Odyssey*, is considered an important literary work as it deals with the Christian afterlife, although it is imaginative.

The modern fantasy literature, which is the kind most people today recognize as fantasy, is only a couple of centuries old. It began with the Scottish author George MacDonald who influenced amongst others J.R.R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. George MacDonald's *Phantastes* is considered to be the first fantasy novel written for adults. However, works such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, makes it difficult to mark clearly when the modern sense of fantasy literature was established.

Novels like *Lord of the Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* becoming films have given the fantasy literature a boost in recruiting readers. Even as this thesis is in the making a film version of *Beowulf* has been on the big screen and can now be seen on DVD. The world of fantasy fiction has increased, and authors like Robert Jordan with his *Wheel of Time* and Patricia McKillip's *Riddle-Master trilogy*, and of course, J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter series have added more to the world of fantasy.

“Fantasy enables us to enter worlds of infinite possibility.”¹

The fantasy genre can be closely connected to other categories that uses the realistic genre with twist, but they all share the possibility of stretching imagination beyond our realistic view, yet make it seem plausible or a possibility. The ideas of Leonardo da Vinci or the written works by Jules Verne have shown people an imaginary world which has come to life in today’s world. Flying machines and underwater vessels are no longer that extraordinary as they are a part of society, it’s just that we call them planes and submarines.

Giving an exact definition or description to what fantasy literature really is can be found rather difficult. This genre is vast and stretches as far as our imagination go and perhaps a bit further. Still every category within fantasy literature shares the ability to evoke a sense of something beyond the ordinary, something magical or mysterious. Of course one can find these things in a realistic genre as well, but in fantasy literature the use of the supernatural or impossibilities is more prudent.

The growth of fantasy as a literary genre expanded as we saw the rise of the industrial revolution as well as scientific and technological expansion. As always humans have sought an explanation of why things are the way they are, and many of the solutions have been attributed to gods or religion in one way or another. With the growth of science and technology humans have found solutions elsewhere, in nature and in becoming creators themselves. Yet the ability of imagination and superstition still reside within us. Thus the supernatural or magical features in fantasy literature evoke wonder, scepticism as well as credibility. It does not require logical explanation of the events as the reader accepts the lack of the realistic.

As mentioned above, fantasy literature is closely connected to other types of fiction. There are the genres of science fiction, gothic horror and utopian fiction to mention some. Science fiction is the genre in which we often connect with movies concerning spaceships, distant galaxies and perhaps even a light-sabre, yet there is more to it. Science fiction as a literary genre takes the reader into a world which is often closely connected to ours, or we

¹ Richard Mathews, *Fantasy – the Liberation of Imagination*, p. 1.

recognise it as a world similar to our own. The main story or the thematic concepts within science fiction is often based on something recognisable.

“It depicts events in a rational universe in which occurrences are subject to reasonable scientific explanation and causality, however futuristic, alien, or inventive the science.”²

There are many similarities between science fiction and fantasy, and it can sometimes be hard to distinguish one from the other as the boundaries between them are rather blurred. One of the main distinctions, however, is the use of the magical in fantasy. As seen in the Harry Potter series, the wizards and witches use magical spells to protect or hurt one another as well as getting the potatoes peeled, whereas in the movie *Equilibrium*³, a single pill would sustain the nutritious need. In the *Back to the Future* trilogy⁴ a tiny pizza-looking thing was micro-waved into becoming a large pizza in the second movie. In this trilogy time-travel was the story, which often occurs in science fiction. We can also find time-travel, or folding of space in the classic *Dune* written by Frank Herbert. In science fiction they use technology to travel directly from one point to another. In fantasy we find dragons and brooms as a means of transportation, or teleportation using magic as in the Harry Potter series.

The utopian fiction distinguishes itself from fantasy through being closer to the realistic world. Its necessity lies in the importance of portraying an idealistic society and thus need to keep a close relationship to our society. Utopian fiction wishes to show a society or world which is better than the one we actually live in. In fantasy one can find elements of this as well as of the opposite, but it is not necessarily crucial to its story. In other cases the utopian fiction describes a perfect world which is too perfect for human kind to accept, and eventually this perfect world falls in to pieces.

Gothic horror also relies on something beyond our realistic world, yet it is set in a very realistic world. Elements found in this genre include castles, dark and ominous places, monsters, beast and ghost. One of the most well-known characters in this genre is Dracula. He

² Richard Mathews, *Fantasy – the Liberation of Imagination*, p. 4.

³ Director: Kurt Wimmer, production year: 2002.

⁴ Director: Robert Zemeckis, production year: 1985, 1989, 1990.

signifies something dark and evil yet he also portrays the mystical, sensuality and romance. This genre features a struggle between man and beast, between love and darkness, and things such as forbidden emotions.

Fantasy literature has changed as the world itself changes. In older times unexplained events were attributed to gods or supernatural creatures. Today we are exposed to these mythical creatures through literature and film, while we are affected by the innovations of today and the scientific and technological possibilities of tomorrow. Thus, the modern fantasy literature has the possibility and ability to take all these elements into account in creating a story. Fantasy aims to tell a story and forward various themes, especially the ones concerning love and hatred, good and evil. It uses different elements of the supernatural, or magical, to pursue and make statements concerning the issues they wish to emphasize, as well as entertaining the readers. And when it comes to the *Harry Potter* series, all the above-mentioned elements can be called a success.

The Problem of Evil and the Free Will of Man

The problem of evil often signifies the question of why there is evil in the world, when God, who is creator and designer of the world, is apparently good in all his perfection. Here the issues of whether or not God is omnipotent in the meaning given to that word, or if He intentionally lets evil exist in our world can be debated. But before we delve deeper into the problem of evil, there is another aspect to be considered when talking about evil and that is the concept of the free will. The free will of man is important to take into account as it is closely connected to the issue of evil.

Free Will

In the book *Free Will*⁵ it says that free will can be considered as the opposite of causation. Free will contains the ability to choose ones actions, whereas causation is the relationship between an event, a cause, and the reaction or consequence of this event, the effect. The problem of the free will has been studied by many, and therefore has many solutions or theories about whether or not we have free will. For some, the free will was given to men as a gift from God as God wanted men to be able to choose whether or not to believe in him. As God is given the credit of being omnipotent, God then has the possibility of rewarding the believers a place in Heaven. He can also, when the time comes, prove His existence to the non-believers and thus punish and forgive as it is in His power to do so. I found the above statement on the internet, which is from a message given at Grace Community Church in Panorama City, California, by John MacArthur Jr.⁶ I found it very interesting as he questions how man interprets the omnipotence of God, as well as posing questions that someone like me would pose and get, if not an answer, then an opinion of them.

One can claim that there is no free will, and that as God is omnipotent He then has the power of foreknowledge. That would mean that every thing that man does, every choice that

⁵ Robert Kane (ed.), *Free Will*.

⁶ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *the Origin of Evil*, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/90-235.htm>

man makes is already predetermined, and therefore free will cannot exist. But as men in general have a hard time accepting that everything is predetermined, God has given men the opportunity to choose.

“One indication of how important free will is to us is that people generally feel revulsion at such manipulation and feel demeaned by it when they find out they have been subjected to it.”⁷

When man has the ability to choose, sometimes the questions remain unasked, and thus man chooses what he is already determined to choose as other options were no real options at all. Thus the term: *“free will is an illusion⁸”* which is something people use in a conversation when talking about issues involving choice or something they are eager or reluctant to do. Free will is only a possibility when there is choice. Without choice one cannot choose, thus, the actions are predetermined. However, when there is only one possibility of choice amongst all the options one can choose from, the choice which is made can then said to be predetermined.

When looking at the world one can find it hard to believe that God predetermined that all the bad things that do happen in the world are supposed to happen as if there apparently are meanings behind them. This belief is hard to accept if one is to accept that God is overall good. But with the free will, people themselves make these bad things happen while at the same time either accepting or renouncing the possibility of believing in God’s existence. Believing or not believing in God has been an issue for centuries. All the different kinds of religion and beliefs, as well as historical event such as the crusades are evidence for that. Human beings have always looked up to the sky and to the surroundings to find cause, or reason, for their existence. In one way or another, the power of existence has been given to something or someone above human reach. However, because of all the changes and developments in society, people become more aware of how the world works. This has resulted in, for some, a distance from religion, and for others religion has become even more important. Examples of these phenomena can be seen all around us. Books and movies take

⁷ Robert Kane (ed.), *Free Will*, p. 2.

⁸ A term I have heard on several occasions when discussing the choices one has, and often in combinations with things one does not really feel like doing.

up the issues of creation and even create alternate worlds. *Dark City*⁹ and *the Matrix trilogy*¹⁰ are some of them.

Dark City is about a world created by other beings into which a number of humans have been abducted and placed for them to study. These other beings consist of several individuals but have only one soul which they share. For us, being an individual and share one soul with all the other individuals is incomprehensible, and due to our nature an impossibility. These beings desire to gain a soul of their own just like the humans. In order to do this they study the memories of the humans they have abducted by stealing the memories, mixing them up and giving the humans new memories which do not belong to them. But even so, they do not succeed. Instead one of the humans “wakes up” during an insemination of memories and eventually frees this world from the other beings. Even though it all happens in a world that has been created by these aliens far away from Earth, and the humans are beings played as puppets, there are underlying messages. In one way this movie celebrates the humans and the possibilities that we inhabit, while at the same time showing us things that we often take for granted. But looking at it from another point of view it appears that the bestial nature of human beings is also an issue. People can choose to act the way they want, they can choose to kill. I will come back to this sort of behaviour later on.

Humans do have a will of their own in which they choose their ways. And of course, one cannot temper with creations that are not man-made, or created by God if you will. By playing God, sooner or later what you have done will turn on you. This is also shown very clearly in the *Matrix trilogy*. In this trilogy you see what happens when man become God and creates an artificial intelligence. The AI turns on the humans and eventually it leads to man’s destruction of the world as we know it. The AI then takes control and uses humans as puppets to survive themselves. The humans are being plugged into a computer system which enables them to continue living as they did before the existence of AI. And as humans create energy, the AI can continue surviving. In this world people are programmed, but in order for this program to work some measures needed to be taken into account. When the AI first created a perfect world, the program did not succeed. It was when the AI created a program which is

⁹ Director: Alex Proyas, production year: 1997

¹⁰ Directors: Andy Wachowski/Larry Wachowski, production year: 1999-2003

similar to the modern society of today did it succeed. The cause for this was given by the one called the Architect in a dialogue with the main character Neo.

“The Architect - The first matrix I designed was quite naturally perfect, it was a work of art, flawless, sublime. A triumph equaled only by its monumental failure. The inevitability of its doom is as apparent to me now as a consequence of the imperfection inherent in every human being, thus I redesigned it based on your history to more accurately reflect the varying grotesqueries of your nature. However, I was again frustrated by failure. I have since come to understand that the answer eluded me because it required a lesser mind or perhaps a mind less bound by the parameters of perfection. Thus, the answer was stumbled upon by another, an intuitive program, initially created to investigate certain aspects of the human psyche. If I am the father of the matrix, she would undoubtedly be its mother.

Neo - The Oracle.

The Architect - Please. As I was saying, she stumbled upon a solution whereby nearly 99.9% of all test subjects accepted the program, as long as they were given a choice, even if they were only aware of the choice at a near unconscious level. While this answer functioned, it was obviously fundamentally flawed, thus creating the otherwise contradictory systemic anomaly that if left unchecked might threaten the system itself. Ergo, those that refused the program, while a minority, if unchecked, would constitute an escalating probability of disaster.”¹¹

The problem in the program they had created for the humans happened to be the existence of choice whether conscious or not. Choice then appears to be a matter of importance in the lives of human beings.

As globalization has turned the world into a huge network of communication, religion, values and ideas are interchanged and bring people closer to one another while at the same

¹¹ *Matrix Revolutions*

time bringing people further away from each other. The problem of evil then takes a different turn. It may no longer be only a privation of God one thinks of, but more a question of why. However, with free will comes responsibility

When a murderer stands trial, the observers will despise and even hate him/her. But as time goes on and one hears the background of the horrific event, some observers may have a change of heart. They will still convict him, but circumstances may give way for a milder judgement. If the murderer was abused in some way, his childhood ruined or something terrible like that, the observers will then wonder whether this murderer had any choice when it came to his behaviour. They will ask if he could have made a different choice. If it turns out that other circumstances had something to say, their personal judgment, if not the court and jury, will be softer when it comes to this murderer's conviction. After all, the murderer could not have done it any other way due to circumstantial events beyond his responsibility. However, saying that one had no other choice does not necessarily mean that there were no other options or no free will¹².

During my research in this matter I came across Robert Kane¹³, an author of books concerning free will. He asks whether we are truly responsible for our actions, or if the choices we make are already determined by conditioning. Conditioning is a well-known term in psychology and consider how one reacts through various kinds of stimuli, Ivan Pavlov¹⁴ being the first to describe this phenomenon. The question he asks is pictured in the above mentioned movies, and is rather relevant in this thesis about how Lord Voldemort came to be. This brings us back to the problem of evil.

The Problem of Evil

The problem of evil can be described in the question "Why me?" When something terrible happens to a person, the person would ask this very question and most likely not receive an acceptable answer. The problem of evil has existed for a very long time. St Augustine of

¹² Robert Kane (ed.), *Free Will*.

¹³ Robert Kane (ed.), *Free Will*.

¹⁴ A Russian scientist I read about more than a decade ago while studying basic psychology.

Hippo¹⁵ is one of those who have studied this problem, and according to Augustinian tradition the problem of evil is a question of evil being a privation of something good, of God, and thus sin becomes a perversion. The Augustinian tradition divides the challenge of evil in two ways, ontologically and anthropologically. The ontological way consider evil as a privation of being and of goodness, while the anthropological path looks upon evil as the perversion of the human being that is created in the image of God. In other words evil is a bad copy of what a human should be.¹⁶

Acts of good are usually highly recognizable. When asked how to define the term good, people would most likely answer the question with examples of words and of acts which they consider to be good. Acts of evil will probably be described in the same manner. Nevertheless, in some cases acts considered evil may be for the benefit of something good. So how do we define evil? Anything that does not coincide with our needs, wants and wishes could be called evil. This could be interpreted as evil being what we want it to be. There are two words, lament and blame, that in somewhat gives us an idea of evil. The word lament is about evil that happens to us from outside, whereas blame says something about evil that comes from within us and which we are responsible for.

According to Neo-Platonism everything good has its origin in The One, and evil appears the farther away we are from The One. A way of describing it would be to look at The One as the source of light, and when we move away from the light it gets darker. The absence of light can be interpreted as the absence of good – which we call evil. In other words, in darkness is the presence of evil¹⁷. The Christian belief has a long tradition in coming to terms with the problem of evil, and since they still work on this problem it would be safe to say that they haven't come to terms with it as there are as many answers or solutions as there are opinions. Still Christianity has spent a lot of time reflection on this. The Augustinian tradition is very good example of this work.

¹⁵ A theologian

¹⁶ Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, p. 75.

¹⁷ Helge Svare, *I Sokrates' fotspor*.

St. Augustine of Hippo claimed that the first rebellion took place shortly after the creation of the first men. As Adam and Eve disobeyed the words of God by eating the apple from the forbidden tree, the nature of rebellion has resided in men ever since. Therefore, men themselves were the cause of which they became distant from God, and thus gained the nature of evil¹⁸. The Augustinian tradition refers to the religious works of St. Augustine which has been forwarded by other thinkers. In his works he debates the problem of evil and tries to minimize the problem, making it not as big a deal as it would seem. Human beings are created in the image of God he says, and thus humans are good and wonderful. But as they have the opportunity to wonder, ask questions and make their own choices, ultimately they will give in to options that are not of the good, thus we sin. St. Augustine also claimed sinners do no attempt to do evil, but rather they search for other goods that do not coincide with God's intention of good, and the act or choice becomes evil. He also claimed that evil had to be caused by man himself as he moved away from God, calling it a privation of God.

*"...evil had to be solely a consequence of the created order's swerve away from God"*¹⁹

In Christian belief being apart from God and His bliss would be a terrible punishment. By using light as a symbol of God, or goodness, we would prefer to be in the light. But by being in light we would be exposed, and thus people who choose to do something unacceptable would move away from the light and rather choose the shadow or perhaps even darkness so that they will not be seen clearly. Evil is often described with darkness, much because one can hide in it and because one fears it. Darkness can be a rather claustrophobic space in which we float in, whereas light is something warm that is wrapped around us as protection.

In *Summa Theologica* Thomas Aquinas discusses the existence of God and the presence of evil. He debates that evil is a privation of good. As Being is good, and there are various degrees of good, hence evil exists, but more as a form of necessity for good or a medicine for the continuity of good²⁰. Evil is defined as the opposite of good, and a privation

¹⁸ Helge Svare, *I Sokrates' fotspor*.

¹⁹ Charles T. Mathewes, *Evil and the Augustinian Tradition*, p. 64.

²⁰ Mark Larrimore (ed.), *The Problem of Evil – a reader*.

of good. It is the humans, who have been given the gift of free will, which makes the choices. In that case, we do not find the ultimate source of evil.

From a different point of view, God created the possibility of evil by giving the humans free will. Thus, God did not create evil. Instead, the space in which evil can reside appeared as an opportunity for God to show other abilities as the Almighty. By allowing evil He would be able to not only create, but also give the sinners or evildoers salvation. God would have the opportunity to show wrath due to the existence of evil as well as the opportunity to destroy evil forever when that day may come²¹. That would give the possibility that God allowed a space for evil as a means to an end. It would simply be a matter of cause and effect. The actions of evil cause a ripple effect, which ends in the purpose of good.

In present-day thinking, evil can be connected to terms such as mischievous behaviour, indifference, prejudice, ignorance, as the results of these acts usually have a sad outcome. Actions due to immaturity are often referred to as acts of evil. The causes of these acts of evil usually become connected to the social environment and family relations. It is not often that one considers a person's act of evil as evil connected purely to that person. Instead one tries to describe the cause through that person's relation to the society in one way or another.

In fantasy fiction, the world is often portrayed as a battleground between good and evil. Whether the characters are good or bad, or their actions are good or bad, comes down to the choices each of them makes.

*"I met him when I travelled around the world. A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it..."*²²

The term power is a word associated with both positive and negative feelings. Having power and using it for something good is positive. Used the wrong way it becomes a negative, even if it was for the cause of something good.

²¹ ²¹ John F. MacArthur, Jr., *the Origin of Evil*, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/90-235.htm>

²² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 211.

“’Would I?’ asked Dumbledore heavily. ‘I am not so sure. I had proven, as a very young man, that power was my weakness and my temptation. It is a curious thing, Harry, but perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it. Those who, like you, have leadership thrust upon them, and take up the mantle because they must, and find to their own surprise that they wear it well.’”²³

In reading the Harry Potter novels, evil becomes personified in Voldemort while his followers and other beings seem genuinely evil by nature. Yet some of Lord Voldemort’s servants do the Dark Lord’s bidding out of fear and others through pure admiration. Of these beings of evil in the Harry Potter series, as well as in other kinds of literature, can it be said that they became evil or were they born evil? How do we define the evil surrounding Lord Voldemort and his followers?

Evil can be measured in as many ways as we interpret it, but we would all most likely agree when we say that evil is something that is not good. But in most cases we would interpret evil as something horrible, something more than pinching your baby brother or baby sister in the arm just because he or she annoyed you in some way. Murder and torture would be acts we would define as evil, and try to understand the reason why. This is also the case in the Harry Potter series concerning the evil events that take place. The actions Harry Potter and his friends do which they know are against the school regulations at Hogwarts are actions that can be described as wrong or bad. But they seem to be accepted as it can be considered as only a little mischievous behaviour, or even that the actions preserves a better good. Whereas the torturing and murders performed by Lord Voldemort and his servants are defined as evildoings because the badness of these actions is too cruel to be considered just a little mischievous.

What all these not good actions have in common though, is that they are all performed through by the performers on their own account. In other words; they chose to do it. Hence the importance of taking man’s free will into account when discussing evil. One of the main issues then becomes whether or not they could have done otherwise? Many of the wrong things that Harry Potter and his friend do concerning the involvement of Lord Voldemort are

²³J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 575.

chosen as a means to an end, the end being of course the end of the Dark Lord. Lord Voldemort chooses to do what he does also as a means to an end. He has several goals to achieve, and all the bad things he has done comes from the choices he has made in order to achieve his goals. Evil then becomes a matter of definition depending on the eyes that see and the goal or goals to be achieved.

Before I go deeper into my quest of trying to answer some of the questions or problems that I have posed, there are a few other matters in which I wish to deal with. Firstly, an introduction concerning the author, J. K. Rowling, whose Harry Potter series and the character of Lord Voldemort that has befallen my interest, ought to be in place. Secondly, an overview of the contents in these books will be presented. Thirdly I will give an account on Lord Voldemort's life as has been given in brief glimpses throughout the Harry Potter novels. This I find very important when I finally intend to try and find out whether Lord Voldemort was born evil, in much the same way as the characters portraying the son of the Devil in several movies, or if it was due to other circumstances befallen Lord Voldemort from the outside just like other villains or evil persons we meet or hear of in our every day life. In the final part in which I will try to analyse this evil character Lord Voldemort I will take into account other works and characters that may or may not be in a similar situation.

Brief Introduction of the Author J. K. Rowling

J.K. Rowling, the author and mother of Harry Potter, was born 31 July 1965 in Yate, Gloucestershire, England, and is one of Britain's best-selling authors. She has studied French and Classics at the University of Exeter which has been useful in her writing of the Harry Potter novels. The first Harry Potter book was published under her own name, Joanne Rowling. But as the publishers worried that the book might not attract young boys as readers as it was written by a female author, they suggested the use of initials. As Joanne Rowling did not have a middle name, she chose K for Kathleen, from her grandmother, to be the second initial in her pen name J. K. Rowling.

*"...my favourite grandparent, Kathleen, whose name I later took when I needed an extra initial"*²⁴

She has found inspirations for the Harry Potter books and their characters from her own experiences and surroundings. The death of her mother gave her an even better understanding of Harry Potter and the loss of his parents. This event made her move to Portugal for a while, teaching English. There she met her first husband, but the marriage ended and she moved back to Britain, then with a young daughter. During this time she became diagnosed with clinical depression. It was through experiences such as these that characters like the Dementors, and the object, the Mirror of Erised, came to be.

*"Now, Harry's feelings about his dead parents had become much deeper, much more real. In my first weeks in Portugal I wrote my favourite chapter in Philosopher's Stone, the Mirror of Erised."*²⁵

*"It was the feeling of her illness which brought her the idea of Dementors, soulless creatures featured in Harry Potter."*²⁶

The Harry Potter books have become a worldwide phenomenon, and she has become a rather wealthy woman. Unfortunately with fame come accusations of plagiarism and ghost-writers.

²⁴ J. K. Rowling, *Official site*, <http://www.jkrowling.com/en/index.cfm>

²⁵ J. K. Rowling, *Official site*, <http://www.jkrowling.com/en/index.cfm>

²⁶ J. K. Rowling, *Official site*, <http://www.jkrowling.com/en/index.cfm>

Nancy Stouffer, another author of children's books, claimed that Rowling has based the Harry Potter novels on her books. Rowling filed a lawsuit against her and won. There have also been rumours about J. K. Rowling being an actress acting out the role of author while the novels are written by so-called ghost-writers. If that would be the case only the ones involved would know. Nevertheless, the books and J. K. Rowling are an enormous success.

The Presence of Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter Books

The fight between good and evil in the Harry Potter series is mostly concentrated around Harry Potter and his friends (good) and Lord Voldemort and his servants (evil). As Harry Potter lives his life as young boys do, the threat of the Dark Lord is ever present.

We become acquainted with Lord Voldemort and his deeds in the first few pages of chapter one in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. His infamous being is introduced to us through one of his horrible actions, which is a well-known call sign of his, the killing of people. Throughout the seven books in this series we encounter various types of horrible events that are in one way or another related to Lord Voldemort. The story of Harry Potter's life coincides with the rise and fall of Lord Voldemort. Although there are numerous events in each book, the connection between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort permeates each book. In each book we learn something about the Dark Lord, his younger years as a little boy, his transformation into Lord Voldemort and events concerning his actions in his adult life. Before going deeper into the life of Lord Voldemort, I intend to give a brief summary of the encounters between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort in each book including a very brief summary of the novels themselves.

The Harry Potter Series

The Harry Potter series is a fantasy series that consist of seven separate novels. The story is about an ordinary little boy, Harry Potter, living with his aunt Petunia, uncle Vernon and his cousin Dudley. On his eleventh birthday he discovers that he is not as ordinary as he thought. He is a wizard and has been enrolled at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. It appears that Harry Potter's parents, Lily and James Potter, who according to his aunt and uncle had died in a car-accident when he was a little boy, were a witch and a wizard, and they had not died in a car-accident. The truth was that they had been killed by Lord Voldemort, the most evil wizard for hundreds of years, who had also tried to kill Harry Potter but did not succeed. Instead Harry Potter had survived with only a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead and placed at the home of his aunt and uncle.

For the next seven years Harry Potter will, together with his best friends from Hogwarts, Ron and Hermione, learn more about magic, friendship and love as well as facing danger as he more than once comes face to face with the one who had killed his parents, killed and caused a lot of people much pain, Lord Voldemort. And he will, just as the readers will, learn more and more about the life of the Dark Lord and the cause of his parents' death and the scar on his forehead. They are all connected through a prophecy, but first and foremost they are connected through the never-ending struggle between life and death, love and ignorance, and good and evil.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

The very first mention of Lord Voldemort appears on one of the very first pages in the book. Mr. Dursley, Harry Potter's uncle, walks into someone and apologizes whereas the response from the other man is:

"Don't be sorry, my dear sir, for nothing could upset me today! Rejoice, for You-Know-Who has gone at last! Even Muggles like yourself should be celebrating this happy, happy day!"²⁷

Harry Potter himself, though, only becomes acquainted with the names Lord Voldemort and You-Know-Who during his first meeting with the half-giant Hagrid and the wizarding world on his eleventh birthday. However, during his first year at Hogwarts he becomes more and more acquainted with the surroundings of the name Lord Voldemort. Only it is not until the very end of the book that he comes face to face with the Dark Lord himself.

As the title of the first Harry Potter book indicates, the story evolves around a stone known as the Philosopher's Stone. The stone belongs to Nicholas Flamel and it is used for making the Elixir of Life. The stone having a trait like that would of course attract Lord Voldemort who has been disembodied and is now only a spirit-like being since the attempted murder on Harry Potter while he was a baby.

²⁷ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 10.

In the final chapter, Harry comes face to face with Lord Voldemort. As Lord Voldemort has not attained a body of his own, he shares the body of Professor Quirrell like a parasite.

“Where there should have been a back to Quirrell’s head, there was a face, the most terrible face Harry had ever seen. It was chalk white with glaring red eyes and slits for nostrils, like a snake.”²⁸

Although we do not come face to face with Lord Voldemort until the very end of the book, there are hints and information throughout the book that signal his presence and foretells the oncoming battle between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort. So far we get an indication of Lord Voldemort being someone that people fear. And it is even scarier when the people who fear him have magical powers, powers that we in reality do not possess.

Harry Potter and the Chamber of Mystery

In the second Harry Potter novel, we learn that Harry discovers an ability that ties him even closer to Lord Voldemort. Harry has the ability to speak to snakes; he is a Parselmouth. This is a trait not well looked upon by the others due to the connections with Lord Voldemort and the founder of the Slytherin house, Salazar Slytherin.

“‘It matters,’ said Hermione, speaking at last in a hushed voice, ‘because being able to talk to snakes was what Salazar Slytherin was famous for. That’s why the symbol of Slytherin house is a serpent.’”²⁹

Although being a Parselmouth was not exactly a joyful ability for Harry Potter, he discovers that it is fortunate after all as he needs to speak Parselmouth to enter the Chamber of Secrets. This proved to be lucky for Lord Voldemort as well. Lord Voldemort opened the Chamber of Secrets while he himself attended the school and released the deadly fear upon Hogwarts. No one, except for perhaps Professor Dumbledore, suspected him of this deed. In this second book, Voldemort is, once again, responsible for opening this room and releasing the basilisk

²⁸ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Stone*, p. 212.

²⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, p. 213.

that dwell there. By using a close friend of Harry Potter to open the Chamber, making Harry even closer involved in this event, and Harry being a Parselmouth, Lord Voldemort gets the opportunity to face his nemesis for the third time and almost successfully killing him.

Lord Voldemort's diary, containing a young Lord Voldemort, finds its way to Ron's little sister Ginny. Not by accident though, as one of Lord Voldemort's followers, Lucius Malfoy is responsible for Ginny finding the diary. In the Chamber of Secrets Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter, come to face each other once again. However, this time it is a 16-year-old Tom Marvolo Riddle that stands before Harry Potter. It is now that Harry learns of the anagram that hides Lord Voldemort's given name.

*“'Voldemort,' said Riddle softly, 'is my past, present and future, Harry Potter...' He pulled Harry's wand from his pocket and began to trace it through the air, writing three shimmering words: TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE. Then he waved the wand once, and the letters of his name re-arranged themselves: I AM LORD VOLDEMORT.”*³⁰

The behaviour of Tom Marvolo Riddle signifies someone who feels superior and has a lot of high thoughts about himself. This is an ongoing trait that Lord Voldemort has throughout his life, and is also a personality feature of someone with a psychological disorder, which we will learn more about later.

Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban

In the third novel, we do not meet Lord Voldemort in person. As far as we have been informed in the former books, Lord Voldemort has no body and has still yet to come to power. Instead, we learn more about the events that led to the present state of Lord Voldemort.

Peter Pettigrew was part of the quartet consisting of James Potter, Remus Lupin and Sirius Black. These four were good friends at Hogwarts and later on in life. When they discovered that Voldemort was after the Potters, Peter Pettigrew, through the advice of Sirius

³⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, p. 337.

Black, became the Potters Secret-Keeper. This meant that only Pettigrew would know of the whereabouts of the Potters unless he told someone else, which of course he did.

“‘Lily and James only made you Secret-Keeper because I suggested it,’ Black hissed so venomously that Pettigrew took a step backwards. ‘I thought it was the perfect plan... a bluff ... Voldemort would be sure to come after me, would never dream they’d use a weak, talentless thing like you ... it must have been the finest moment of your miserable life, telling Voldemort you could hand him the Potters.’”³¹

Pettigrew told Voldemort of the whereabouts of the Potters as he figured that there would be something to gain from it. He decided that being on the same side as Lord Voldemort would give him, if nothing else, a life in which Lord Voldemort would not chase him, torture him or kill him. This tells us of Lord Voldemort’s ability to create fear, and to use whomever that was willing to serve him in one way or another.

Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire

The fourth Harry Potter book is larger in contents than the other three, and shows a remarkable event concerning the Dark Lord. This book begins with a scene involving Frank, a muggle, Peter Pettigrew, Lord Voldemort and his pet snake Nagini, which later turn into a vision or dream that awakens Harry Potter as his scar begins to burn.

“ ...all Harry knew was that at the moment when Voldemort’s chair had swung around, and he, Harry, had seen what was sitting in it, he had felt a spasm of horror which had awoken him... or had that been the pain in his scar.”³²

Another event in the beginning of the fourth novel is the Quidditch World Cup, which ends terribly as the Death Eaters, Lord Voldemort’s followers, show themselves and their nature to hurt people, especially muggles, as well as the appearance of the Dark Mark. The

³¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, p. 271.

³² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, p. 24.

involvement of Lord Voldemort and of the Death Eaters this early in the book suggests that more is to come.

Throughout the school year, Harry Potter feels his scar burning more often than ever before. The climax in this fourth book comes in connection with the third and final task of the Triwizard Tournament, the resurrection of Lord Voldemort. As Harry Potter and another contestant, Cedric Diggory, touch the Triwizard Cup, they become teleported to another place. The cup has been bewitched into a portkey, and they find themselves near a graveyard. Several persons show up and one of them kills Cedric Diggory on Lord Voldemort's command.

“From far away, above his head, he heard a high, cold voice say, ‘Kill the spare’. A swishing noise and a second voice, which screeched the words to the night: Avada Kedavra!’”³³

At this point Lord Voldemort is still without a proper body, but more a body with the shape of a baby. Through spells and different ingredients including the blood of Harry Potter and Pettigrew's hand, an attempt to resurrect Lord Voldemort takes place.

“‘Bone of the father, unknowingly given, will renew your son. Flesh of the servant willingly given, you will revive your master. Blood of the enemy forcibly taken, you will resurrect your foe.’”³⁴

The attempt is a success and Lord Voldemort rises again fully embodied.

“The thin man stepped out of the cauldron, staring at Harry... and Harry stared back into the face that had haunted his nightmares for three years. Whiter than a skull, with wide, livid scarlet eyes, and a nose that was as flat as a snake's, with slits for nostrils... Lord Voldemort had risen again.”³⁵

³³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, p. 691.

³⁴ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, pp. 694-695, several quotes added together as I found it better that way in this setting.

³⁵ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, pp. 696-697.

Lord Voldemort then plays with Harry Potter with the intent to kill, but luck or perhaps faith, in Harry Potter's favour prevents Lord Voldemort from killing him. Their two wands have a special connection to each other, which saves Harry Potter whilst bewildering the Dark Lord. The escape of Harry Potter lets the wizarding community know of Lord Voldemort's resurrection, and gives them the opportunity to take action.

Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix

The fifth book is much darker and ominous than the other four. It is apparent that something dark is hovering over the wizarding community. The Dementors, guardians of the wizarding prison Azkaban, seem to have joined the dark forces. There are other people and creatures as well who seem to side with the Dark Lord.

The book starts by informing the reader of Harry Potter's feeling of loneliness and abandonment as he hears nothing from his friends or from his headmaster Albus Dumbledore. He finds this hurtful due to the events that took place at the end of last school year when Lord Voldemort became bodily reincarnated before the very eyes of Harry Potter himself (Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire). As Harry wanders around his neighbourhood, crossing paths with his cousin Dudley, they are being attacked by two Dementors.

"It was impossible ... they couldn't be here ... not in Little Whining ... he strained his ears ... he would hear them before he saw them ...

'I'll tell Dad!' Dudley whimpered. 'W-where are you? What are you d-do-?'

'Will you shut up?' Harry hissed, 'I'm trying to lis-'

But he fell silent. He had heard just the thing he had been dreading."³⁶

As we already know of the relationship between Lord Voldemort and Harry Potter, it is rather obvious that the Dementors have been sent there either by Lord Voldemort himself or by his servants. Nevertheless, the Dementor-attack on Harry Potter and his cousin, tells us that there

³⁶ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, p. 20.

is more to come, and that the Dark Lord is ever present. The servants of the Dark Lord seem to be increasing in numbers, some of them though, not under his direct order but perhaps unknowingly or unwillingly abide by his desires.

The Dementor-attack forced Harry, who is an under-aged wizard and therefore not allowed to use magic outside school, to use magic as a means of protection. This resulted in various letters concerning this rule-breaking, which then lead to his trial at the Ministry of Magic. Even there dark forces seem to be working against Harry Potter as the time of the hearing was changed in the last minute making him late. But even so, the dark forces are not almighty, as the Headmaster manages to turn up in time, much to the surprise of the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge. But most importantly, this novel lets the reader discover the truth about Lord Voldemort's quest to kill Harry Potter. In his youth, Lord Voldemort learnt of a prophecy involving himself and a boy who could be the cause of his downfall.

As Lord Voldemort failed to kill Harry Potter during his first attempt, and his curse backfired on him leaving him in a state of mere existence, and his continuous efforts to kill the boy have proved unsuccessful, Lord Voldemort decides to attain the prophesy hoping it would give him the solution. It turns out that the prophecy given to Lord Voldemort was not complete, as half of it was missing. The entire prophecy read like this:

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have trice defied him, born as the seventh month die ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies ...”³⁷

The attempt to steal the prophesy fails, and Lord Voldemort faces Dumbledore for the first time since their last meeting at Hogwarth's. The result of this meeting ends in Lord Voldemort fleeing and several of his Death Eaters captured. With this, the war between good and evil is finally out in the open.

³⁷ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, p. 741.

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince

This book contains a lot of information on Lord Voldemort, both facts and interpretations of the given facts. Memories of people who had contact with Lord Voldemort as a child, a schoolboy and an adult play an important part in the quest for the inevitable meeting of either Harry Potter or Lord Voldemort, which will lead to the death of one of them or perhaps both.

The book opens with a meeting between the muggle world and the wizarding world. The former Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge, informs the muggle Prime Minister of his successor and of the terrible event that have inflicted the muggles as well as the wizarding population. It turns out that the followers of Lord Voldemort are ever increasing.

As we follow Harry Potter and his experiences, we learn very much about Lord Voldemort and how he came to be. Professor Dumbledore takes Harry Potter through the world of memories to discover the life of Lord Voldemort. We learn of the events which lead Lord Voldemort to the orphanage where he discover is abilities that would later take him to Hogwarts. A meeting, at the orphanage, where Professor Dumbledore introduces himself and Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry Lord Voldemort is told what he always believed that he was special.

“‘I knew I was different,’ he whispered to his own quivering fingers. ‘I knew I was special. Always, I knew there was something.’”³⁸

Further on in the sixth novel, we learn that Lord Voldemort is a descendant of Salazar Slytherin. His mother, Merope Gaunt, was the daughter of Marvolo Gaunt, one of Salazar Slytherin’s last descendants.

“‘See this?’ he bellowed at Ogden, shaking a heavy gold locket at him, while Merope spluttered and gasped for breath. ‘I see it, I see it!’ said Ogden hastily. ‘Slytherin’s!’ yelled Gaunt. ‘Salazar Slytherin’s! We’re his last living descendants, what do you say to that, eh?’”³⁹

³⁸ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 254.

³⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 196.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows

In the final book, Lord Voldemort still tries to discover ways in which to prevent his downfall which he believes will be caused by Harry Potter. He goes to the length as to retrieve a wand only known in the wizarding folklore, the Elder Wand. What he yet again fails to realize is that there is more in this world than meets the eye. His quest to kill Harry Potter, and is already much maimed soul, fails to discover the destructions of his horcruxes. When Lord Voldemort finally realizes that Harry Potter and his friends are on a crusade to destroy all the containers that holds pieces of Lord Voldemort's soul, it is too late. Yet, Lord Voldemort does not recognize defeat.

“I have been careless, and so have been thwarted by luck and chance, those wreckers of all but the best laid plans. But I know better now. I understand those things that I did not understand before. I must be the one to kill Harry Potter, and I shall be.”⁴⁰

The seventh and, according to the author, the final book finds Harry Potter outside of school. Harry Potter has chosen not to return to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Instead he follows the path shown to him by the deceased professor and headmaster of Hogwarts, Albus Dumbledore, to find the horcruxes and eventually face Lord Voldemort himself.

Harry is now turning 17, which in the wizarding world means that he is coming of age. That would mean that the protective charm that has kept Harry Potter safe will break and he would be a perfect sitting target for Lord Voldemort and his servants.

“Once I'm seventeen, the protective charm that keeps me safe will break, and that exposes you as well as me. The Order is sure Voldemort will target you, whether to torture you to try and find out where I am, or because he thinks by holding you hostage I'd come and try to rescue you.”⁴¹

The Dursleys are therefore being taken care of by some members of the Order and is sent in hiding. Harry Potter is then taken to safety at the home of his best friend Ron, the Burrow. The trip to safety proves to be a difficult task as there are several injuries and deaths on the

⁴⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 13.

⁴¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 33.

way. Harry Potter even comes face to face with the Dark Lord himself, but manages to get to safety.

Harry Potter will not take the journey of finding and destroying Lord Voldemort's horcruxes by himself. His friends Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley are determined to come with him and aid him in his quest. This is very fortunate for Harry Potter, but not as fortunate for Lord Voldemort as he stays unaware of their plan for a very long time. It is not until novel gets closer to the ending, as the pages seem to decrease in numbers, and the understanding that the fight between the Death Eaters and the Order of the Phoenix is inevitable, does Lord Voldemort question the safety of his horcruxes.

“The scream of rage, of denial, left him as if it were a stranger’s: he was crazed, frenzied, it could not be true, it was impossible, nobody had ever known: how was it possible that the boy could have discovered his secret? (...) Alone amongst the dead, he stormed up and down, and they passed him in vision: his treasures, his safeguards, his anchors to immortality – the diary was destroyed and the cup was stolen; what if, what if, the boy knew about the others? Could he know, had he already acted, had he traced more of them?”⁴²

When the fight between the two factions and their supporters culminates Lord Voldemort commands his forces to retreat, giving his enemies one hour to treat the injured and take care of the dead. When the hour is up Harry Potter must have given up and come to Lord Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest or he will kill everyone. Harry Potter has understood his destiny and goes to face Lord Voldemort, and this one kills him.

“He saw the mouth move and a flash of green light, and everything was gone.”⁴³

⁴² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 443.

⁴³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 564.

Tom Marvolo Riddle aka Lord Voldemort

Harry Potter's friends mean little to Lord Voldemort. They are of little importance, and at best they serve as a nuisance as they help Harry Potter survive and get through different tasks and obstacles. Lord Voldemort himself has no close friends as he does not understand the significance of it. He himself does not believe in such things as friendship, closeness nor love, and particularly not love. The one thing he carries close to him is his pet snake Nagini, but for a whole other reason than love or care as we think of it.

The Life of Tom Marvolo Riddle

Tom Marvolo Riddle's story can be put together through various pieces and glimpses of his life discovered by amongst others, Professor Albus Dumbledore. As children with wizarding abilities are picked up by the wizarding community, they are given the opportunity to study at one of the schools of witchcraft and wizardry. In Tom Marvolo Riddle's case, Albus Dumbledore, a teacher representing Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, came to the orphanage where he lived.

Tom Marvolo Riddle had lived all his young life at an orphanage when he was visited by Professor Dumbledore. He is described as being handsome, dark-haired, tall, pale, in other words very much like his father as his mother had wished for. Interestingly though, his handsome features is later described as close to bestial when he receives confirmation of his special abilities by Professor Dumbledore. This facial transformation, although brief at that moment, will evolve as he becomes older and more experienced in the Dark Arts of magic.

The meeting at the orphanage took place when Tom Marvolo Riddle was eleven years old, the age in which children with magical ability begin their education at Hogwarts. He had lived at the orphanage all his life. His mother, Merope Gaunt, had come to the orphanage on New Year's Eve. There she had given birth to Tom Marvolo Riddle, and then she had died after giving him his name.

“New Year's Eve and bitter and cold, snowing you know. Nasty night. And this girl, not much older than I was myself at the time, came staggering up the front steps. Well,

*she wasn't the first. We took her in and she had the baby within the hour. And she was dead in another hour.'"*⁴⁴

Tom didn't know much of his parents at the time. But he was sure, once he was told by Professor Dumbledore the nature of his abilities, that his magical powers were not an inheritance from his mother as she had died when he was born. He figured that if his mother had had magical powers she wouldn't have died, but instead have conquered death somehow using magic.

He discovered the truth about his parents later in life. His mother was Merope Gaunt, daughter of Marvolo Gaunt. The two of them and Morfin Gaunt, Merope's brother, were the last living descendants of the great Salazar Slytherin. This means that Tom Marvolo Riddle, later Lord Voldemort, was now the last living descendant of Salazar Slytherin as his mother had died, and so had Marvolo and Morfin Gaunt too. He also found out that his father was a muggle that had left his mother before he was born. His father Tom Riddle, to whom Lord Voldemort had been given his name, was a muggle. He was apparently of a wealthy family, and the marriage to Merope Gaunt, who was rather poor as the wealth of Salazar Slytherin had been squandered away over the years, was a scandal. Before Tom Marvolo Riddle was born, his father left Merope. Most likely Tom Riddle had married Merope Gaunt by the effect of a love potion given to him by Merope. After some time Merope probably believed that he would love her for who she was and not need the love potion, or if nothing else, stay for the sake of the child she was bearing. Unfortunately she was wrong. He never even came to see what became of his child.

Tom Marvolo Riddle disliked the fact that his father had been a muggle. That did not suit him, and he was to kill his father and his so-called grand-parents on the father's side, later in life. He didn't pay much heed to his deceased mother as she had the nerve to be a witch, a person with magical powers, and let herself die.

⁴⁴J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 249.

The Transformation Into Lord Voldemort

The transformation from Tom Marvolo Riddle into Lord Voldemort already began during his time at Hogwarth's. His closest friends and followers were the only ones, at that time, to know of and use this name. He disliked his name as it was given to him by his mother as a memory of his father, a muggle, but even more so, he disliked the name because it was ordinary.

“‘There are a lot of Toms,’ muttered Riddle”⁴⁵

Lord Voldemort was not all too pleased having a muggle for a father, and emphasized the importance of pure-blood. Even after his resurrection did he hold to his racist behaviour. In the beginning of *Hallows* one finds Lord Voldemort in the house of Malfoy together with the Death Eaters. There they make a plan to kill Harry Potter as Harry Potter is coming of age and will no longer be under the protection he has lived under at Privet Drive with his aunt and uncle. The Malfoys have failed one to many times in serving the Dark Lord, and now in a conversation with Bellatrix Malfoy, who adores the Dark Lord, he mocks them as one in the Malfoy family, their niece Nymphadora Tonks, has married the werewolf Remus Lupin.

“‘I’m talking about your niece, Bellatrix. And yours, Lucius and Narcissa. She has just married the werewolf, Remus Lupin. You must be so proud.’”⁴⁶

His malevolent behaviour had followed him since his early childhood. At the orphanage he had thrived on the fact that he was different from the other orphans. His ability for magic was already very well-developed considering his young age, and he also had a certain amount of control. He had already started to use magic against other people, and his doing so was not of the good. There were episodes during his childhood where he had taken some of the children at the orphanage and done something bad to them. The matron of the orphanage, Mrs Cole, could tell Professor Dumbledore of such incidents. The matron could not describe what had happened as she did not witness the so-called crime, but she described the inflicted ones to be

⁴⁵ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 257.

⁴⁶ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, p. 16.

different afterwards. She also told about a rabbit that got hung, even though Tom claimed his innocence; it was likely to be him.

“I can make things move without touching them. I can make animals do what I want them to do, without training them. I can make bad things happen to people who annoy me. I can make them hurt if I want to.”⁴⁷

This shows that he already at an early age used his powers to get what he wanted, to punish, frighten and control people, just like his adult self. As a child he kept souvenirs or trophies from his victims. Professor Dumbledore gave all these pieces of information to Harry Potter, as a preparation for his quest to kill Lord Voldemort, and also made sure that Harry Potter would remember that detail which he called a “magpie-like tendency”. This trait would be important; both for Tom Marvolo Riddle later in his life and for Harry Potters search for a way to kill Lord Voldemort. These kinds of cruelty against animals and people, as well as the magpie-tendency are traits that have been given to some of the most well-known serial killers such as Ted Bundy and Ed Gain. Also the detachment of normal social contact, a charming and/or helpful and kind appearance is ascribed serial killers in general. All these traits are described in series or movies concerning serial killers, as well as in articles and stories that can be read in magazines, books or internet. And in many ways they match the profile of Lord Voldemort too.

Tom Marvolo Riddle was both talented and bright. As mentioned earlier, he knew he was different from the other children at the orphanage, which would of course also indicate different from children in general considering the two divided worlds of muggles and the wizards. He knew he had abilities, later to be known as magic, which he used to gain what he wanted without being caught or punished for it. However, after the conversation with Professor Dumbledore he became more aware of how to act, of his attitude and appearance, in a social context. He quickly understood that there were others like him, with magic, and that he needed to be more cunning in his ways to gain what he desired. This understanding came rapidly after a demonstration by Professor Dumbledore. In understanding that he was a

⁴⁷J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 254.

wizard, Tom probably had images flying through his mind of all the things he could do and get, but he did not let that get the better of himself. His self-control, even at that early age, was well-developed. After this, to him blissful news, Tom asked Professor Dumbledore if he was a wizard too. The positive response triggered Tom in trying to command him, thus using his special abilities, to do some magic. The failure, and later, the humiliation in which Professor Dumbledore showed a little magic by exposing Tom's hidden cardboard box containing objects stolen from the other children taught him to be more subtle and knowing when he had met his match.

Tom Marvolo Riddle was very interested in attending the wizarding school Professor Dumbledore told of. His desires did not lie in wanting to be together with others like him and socialize or feel connected to someone. He wanted to learn more. It was later to be discovered that his thirst for knowledge, especially that of the Dark Arts, came as a result of wanting to be all powerful and escape death.

The Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, situated at a secret location, consists of four Houses, each dedicated to the four great wizards who founded the school; Helga Hufflepuff – House of Hufflepuff, Rowena Ravenclaw – House of Ravenclaw, Godric, Gryffindor – House of Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin – House of Slytherin. All the students who attend this school must go through a ceremony in which they are sorted into the different houses depending on their personal traits one can say. The Sorting Hat, which holds the information on what traits each of the founders praised, is responsible for the sorting. This ceremony placed Tom Marvolo Riddle in the House of Slytherin. Rightfully it was considering his personal traits, but also when taken into account that he was a descendant of Salazar Slytherin. Yet, kinship like this does not need to be essential when it comes to the placing in the four houses, nor the outcome of life afterwards. An example of this is Harry Potter's godfather, Sirius Black. Sirius Black came from a pure-blood family that had much in common with Lord Voldemort's views on muggles. Yet, Sirius Black himself belonged to the House of Gryffindor and had turned his back on his family. But Tom Marvolo Riddle was exactly where he wanted to be. He was surrounded by people that were somewhat likeminded, and he gained respect and admiration, while at the same time learning more about magic and his path towards immortality.

His time at school was what you can call a happy one. He had the company of other wizards and witches, and his talents as a wizard was being fuelled all through the seven years of schooling. The professors at Hogwarts, apart from at least Professor Dumbledore as we know it, were charmed by Tom Marvolo Riddle, the poor orphan with great talents in magic. He had a way of making people feel comfortable around his presence when it was required, only Professor Dumbledore saw through this act. Professor Dumbledore was weary about his behaviour, and right in being so it turned out. Tom still had the idea of becoming immortal haunting him. It led him to discover the Horcruxes, a way of becoming immortal.

“A Horcrux is the word used for an object in which a person has concealed part of their soul.”⁴⁸

In other words a Horcrux is a container for a piece of a soul. Tom then questioned one of his teachers, Professor Slughorn, who eventually told him and being ashamed of doing so, put a memory charm on himself so to not remember having said anything. The Horcruxes and the making of one belong to the Dark Arts and are terrible.

“‘Well, you split your soul, you see,’ said Slughorn, ‘and hide part of it in an object outside the body. Then, even if one’s body is attacked or destroyed, one cannot die, for part of the soul remains earthbound and undamaged. But, of course, existence in such a form...’”⁴⁹

It means that you can take a part of your soul and keep it in a suitable item. In this way, if you die you still have a chance to live as you still have a part of your soul in containment. But the only way to take a part of your soul into such an item you will need to commit murder which turned out that that was something Lord Voldemort did not mind doing. In the following conversation between Professor Slughorn and Tom Marvolo Riddle we get to know a bit about how to make a Horcrux and Tom’s eagerness to learn this piece of dark art.

“But Riddle’s hunger was now apparent; his expression was greedy, he could no longer hide his longing.”

⁴⁸J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 464.

⁴⁹J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 464.

'How do you split your soul?'

'Well,' said Slughorn uncomfortably, 'you must understand that the soul is supposed to remain intact and whole. Splitting it is an act of violation, it is against nature.'

'But how do you do it?'

'By an act of evil – the supreme act of evil. By committing murder. Killing rips the soul apart. The wizard intend upon creating a Horcrux would use the damage to his advantage: he would encase the torn portion-'

*'Encase? But how-?'*⁵⁰

Of course Professor Slughorn is not a killer and thus does not know the spell in which to encase the torn portion of the soul. Lord Voldemort, however, learned the spell somehow as he had made in total seven Horcruxes, as seven appears to be the most powerful number in magic, what he did not know was that he had unintentionally made an eighth Horcrux which also brought about his demise.

Lord Voldemort had felt special ever since he was a little boy, and in the making of the Horcruxes the feeling was no different. It was important that the objects that were to contain the pieces of his soul were special and not just any kind of object. Thus his search for special items began. One of them he managed to get fairly easy as it belonged in his family. The ring of Marvolo Gaunt which had the Peverell coat of arms engraved on it was an item signifying the pure-blood ancestry of the Gaunt family. Lord Voldemort stole it from Morfin, to which Marvolo had passed on the ring. Some of the objects he craved were the belongings of the four founders of the school he was attending. His search for these four items proved almost successfully as he managed to get the locket of Salazar Slytherin, which had once belonged to his mother, the tiara of Rowena Ravenclaw, and the golden cup of Helga Hufflepuff. But one item Lord Voldemort never managed to get his hands on and turn into a Horcrux was the sword of Godric Gryffindor.

⁵⁰ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 465.

Another Horcrux is the diary that Harry Potter encounters in the second book in the series concerning the Chamber of Secrets. With this diary Lord Voldemort intended to perhaps one day, if needed, take possession of someone and release the Slytherin's monster, the Basilisk and it also stated that he was the heir of Salazar Slytherin. The seventh and final Horcrux that Lord Voldemort intended to make involved the killing of Harry Potter due to the prophecy mentioned earlier. However, in failing to kill Harry Potter he became a so-called spectral soul. Being a maimed soul barely existing he managed once he gained the opportunity to split his soul one last time, believing it was the seventh time and encased the torn portion into Nagini, his pet snake. What he did not know, and never even thought about, was that when the curse he threw at Harry Potter backfired a piece of his soul attached itself to the only living thing left which was Harry Potter. With every Horcrux he made, the less humanlike he became, both in appearance and emotionally, although he has shown on several occasions signs of lacking emotion in general.

During his stay at Hogwarts he, according to Professor Dumbledore, searched for some evidence that his father had attended the school. But as his father had been a muggle no sign of him would have been found there, and so he changed his name to Lord Voldemort. But it was not until he graduated from Hogwarts and continued his education elsewhere that he used the name Lord Voldemort in open. His so-called friends, although it is important to remember that Lord Voldemort did not have nor wanted friends, became known as the Death Eaters. The followers of Lord Voldemort, the Death Eaters, were more his servants than friends. They did his every bidding which usually has to do with violence and killing. It is also necessary to mention that the members of the Death Eaters all come from the House of Slytherin, the same as Lord Voldemort himself. And it was through one of these Death Eaters that Lord Voldemort was given a piece of information that would cause him years of pain and later his death. As can be read in the books Lord Voldemort had lots of servants, even admirers, but no friends. He considered people a nuisance that he sometimes needed to achieve his goal, while at the same time they would boost his self-esteem. His attitude towards people, society and life would be causing his success and his undoing.

The Rise and Fall of Lord Voldemort

As a little boy Tom Marvolo Riddle showed himself to be confident and independent. Even at the first meeting with the world of magic he showed an attitude that said he could take care of himself. He was not interested in having professor Dumbledore take him to the train that would take him to school, he just wanted directions and then he would get there himself. This ability to take care of himself showed a maturity that could take him very far, in which it did. His thirst for knowledge as well as talent took him very far, especially in the darker arts of magic. By being cunning he managed to gather the kind of people he wanted around him and made an outward appearance which seemed sympathetic to others.

Through his cunning and mastery of magic he became Lord Voldemort, a powerful wizard which was either respected or feared by the wizarding community. He succeeds in finding a way to become immortal by splitting his soul and placing them in object that are carefully hidden away in case something would happen to his bodily self. Another quest that he has is to find a mythical item, the Elder Wand. This wand is the most powerful wand to exist, but the knowledge of its whereabouts was unknown. A third, and perhaps the most important quest of all, was the death of Harry Potter.

“...either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives....”⁵¹

This prophecy of course triggered Lord Voldemort’s fear of death and desire for immortality. Being immortal not only meant that he would live forever, but that it would also make him the most powerful wizard of all time. After all, he would then have all the time in the world to gain any kind of knowledge that he would desire.

The success of escaping death did have consequences as he no longer had any connection with the torn pieces of his soul. He could not feel whether the Horcruxes had been damaged or if they were in peril. He only came to discover Harry Potter’s destruction of his Horcruxes when one of his servants told him that Harry Potter had stolen the cup of Helga Hufflepuff. This piece of information led him to question whether or not the possibility of

⁵¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, p. 741.

someone else knowing about the Horcruxes and their whereabouts was there. Therefore his trip to check if his Horcruxes were safe and the decision to keep his pet snake Nagini close at all times are proof of his vulnerability and of his fear of death.

There is an ongoing battle between good and evil every day, every second of life, as we know it. In literature this battle has been and is being portrayed several times and in various ways. The major weapon the good side has is *love*, whereas the evil side does not recognize or understand this power, nor does it manage to be close to it. In the case of Lord Voldemort the effect of love can be described in the same way as the relationship between Superman and Kryptonite, painful and deadly.

*“Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign ... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loves us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason. It was agony to touch a person marked by something so good.”*⁵²

Lord Voldemort's fear of death and his rejection and failure to recognise love as a power makes him weak, yet he does not see it. He sees love as a similarity to weakness and does not have the insight to see that it will become his undoing, and that partly caused by someone he believed to be one of his faithful servants, Severus Snape.

When Lord Voldemort finally manages to regenerate himself fully, which is told in the *Goblet*, he summons his Death Eaters to him by pressing the dark mark which is on the arm of every Death Eater. They all show up apart from those in the wizard prison of Azkaban and those too afraid of the Dark Lords retribution. One of those who do not show up is Severus Snape, a teacher at Hogwarts. His later position among the Death Eaters shows that he has come to terms with Lord Voldemort and is again a trusted servant. Other Death Eaters question this, but being too afraid to take it up with the Dark Lord himself, Snape is being questioned and the given response is all too clear.

⁵² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, p. 216.

“‘You think he is mistaken? Or that I have somehow hoodwinked him? Fooled the Dark Lord, the greatest wizard, the most accomplished Legilimens the world has ever seen’”⁵³

Thus the position Snape has with the Dark Lord is established. It becomes clear in the seventh and final book in the Harry Potter series, *Hallows*, that Snape was once a Death Eater with his allegiance towards Lord Voldemort, but his love for the mother of Harry Potter, Lily Potter, and the events in which she died, led Snape to choose the other side and is partly responsible for the death of Lord Voldemort. Severus Snape had been in love with Lily since the first time they met, which was before they both attended Hogwarts. But as they grew up their differences came to show themselves. Snape belonged to the House of Slytherin whereas Lily was a Gryffindor. They tried to remain friends, but eventually their lives led them in different directions and Lily married James Potter. Even so, Severus Snape never stopped loving her. This never-ending love, in which Lord Voldemort never understood the significance of, became a devastating factor in everything Lord Voldemort attempted concerning his quest for power and not to mention the many attempts to kill Harry Potter.

Love seems an important factor in the struggle between Lord Voldemort and his nemesis, Harry Potter. It was love that saved Harry Potter all these times that Lord Voldemort tried to murder him, but as most power-seeking individuals, Lord Voldemort was too blind to see it. Even at the very end, as most heroes would do, Harry Potter asks Lord Voldemort to show some remorse, but he refuses not seeing the importance of it. Thus, Harry Potter has no other choice but to fight back. And like most villains having their plan backfired, so has the Dark Lord as his spell attempting to kill Harry Potter kills himself instead. It was not only the spell that killed Lord Voldemort, nor the destructions of the Horcruxes. There were many things that caused a chain-reaction that eventually led to his demise. But the choices he made as they were shown to him sent him down the path towards his own destruction.

⁵³ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 31.

Evil in Fiction

Fiction tends to tell the reader a story of some sort. It has a meaning behind it and a message it wishes to convey. The fantasy genre is all about doing just that. Fantasy portrays different stories with a message to convey, set in a different setting than the real world. It aims to take the reader some place else while at the same time showing problems that need solving, the same kind of problems that exist in the real world.

The Harry Potter novels are a perfect example of taking the reader into a fantasy world while dealing with real issues that anyone would recognize. Reading and being captured by a fantasy world is not as farfetched as it may sound. Instead this kind of world would wrap the problems in a different coating and present the solutions in a highly recognizable fashion. In this thesis the world we are wrapped into is a magical world that co-exists side by side with the real world. The main characters can venture in and out of the magical world as they wish. They deal with the same issues and difficulties as those in the real world; here the real world being the world as the reader would know it.

The main issue in my thesis is Lord Voldemort and the evil that surrounds him. Before Lord Voldemort became the wizarding world's most feared wizard, who was he? Was Tom Marvolo Riddle evil already at birth, or was it a circumstantial event? If he had been brought up in different surroundings, with loving parents, would he still have become the Dark Lord Voldemort?

The origin of evil has many possibilities. The concept of evil is different depending on history, religion, culture and people. Considering what we have discovered concerning the origin of evil, the recognition of evil has to be looked upon the same way. What recognizes evil depends on the history that lies behind it, where in the world one is and above all the people who are to recognize it. History has shown us that a personified evil of some sort exist in many cultures. The foremost personified evil is found in the Bible behind names such as the devil, Satan, the Deceiver and so on. In the Harry Potter books, the personified evil comes as the figure of Lord Voldemort. In these books, Harry Potter and his friends meet several evil persons of varied degree. But as Lord Voldemort is the main character of evil, and many of the other characters we meet in these books do his bidding, does that mean that they are evil too?

The Death Eaters is a rather large group that follows the command of Lord Voldemort. They have all attended Hogwarts at the House of Slytherin just like the Dark Lord. The reasons they have become a member of the Death Eaters are many, just like the reasons anyone joins a group, a gang or a club. But has the main actions of these Death Eaters are to spread fear, torture and kill other people, the reason for signing up for this group is to get an opportunity to do the above mentioned things. This would suggest that at least the majority of the members are inclined to do bad things and enjoy them. The reason they are a part of the Death Eaters may then be due to an interest in following a leader with apparently the same desires as themselves as well as being a part of something they feel they belong to. Some of them may have second thoughts about what they are doing, such as Peter Pettigrew who on several occasions show signs of not really wanting to be in the position he is in, but they do them anyway out of fear or because they don't know what else to do.

The way the Death Eaters are portrayed, as well as Lord Voldemort himself, is significant in order to understand the positions they have in the novel and helps the reader differ between the characters on each side. Descriptions can be deceitful as they sometimes signify something else than what is actually the truth. In the case of Professor Severus Snape we find this ambiguity which works well to confuse the reader as to his position in the novel, as well as trigger the emotional aspects in the reader. The reader would follow the rollercoaster of good and evil sides of the character throughout the novel, perhaps even change ones mind on whether or not to like this fictional person.

An Analysis of Lord Voldemort

We will now go back to the beginning of Lord Voldemort's life. His first years were spent in an orphanage. His mother, Merope, had come to this orphanage, given birth to him and given him his name, Tom Marvolo Riddle, and then she had died. His father was at the time unknown as his mother had only mentioned that he was as handsome as his father. Of his name we know that he was given his father's name, Tom, as well as the name of his grandfather on his mother's side, Marvolo, and the surname was to be Riddle⁵⁴. Nothing else

⁵⁴ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 249.

was mentioned of this little boy's ancestry or belongings for that matter. Most readers would probably agree that he did not receive the best welcome into this world. In general a good welcome to this world would include a loving mother and father, and a home.

A similar character in the movie industry is that of Riddick in *Pitch Black*⁵⁵. He is a criminal on the most-wanted list. Although this character changes throughout the movie and ends with practically no similarities to Lord Voldemort, his start in life was not all that either.

*“ Think someone could spend half their life in a slam with a horse bit in their mouth and not believe? Think he could start out in some liquor store trash bin with an umbilical cord wrapped around his neck and not believe? Got it all wrong, holy man. I absolutely believe in God... And I absolutely hate the fucker. ”*⁵⁶

So perhaps if Tom Marvolo Riddle had had a better start in life, he might have turned out to be a peace-loving wizard with a knack for sherbet-lemons just like Professor Dumbledore, or would he? Not all children that are orphans turn out bad as they grow up, just as not all who come from a loving family turn up to become nice and peace-loving beings either. For some individuals the circumstances in which they were born and spent their early years will matter very much, but for others not. The attachments that children make during their early years are of importance for the further development functioning socially⁵⁷. But when it comes to Tom Marvolo Riddle, it would seem that the circumstances surrounding his early years may not be of much importance when it comes to him as a person, but that it would have an effect on him as he grows older is apparent.

When it comes to his early childhood, his childhood before attending Hogwarts, we learn that he was already aware of his magical powers although he did not know of the wizarding world yet. He became aware of the fact that with his special abilities he could make people do whatever he wanted them to do, which he found rather pleasant. He may not have been well-liked at the orphanage; we don't really know anything about his emotional relationship with the other children and adults at the orphanage, but we do know that they

⁵⁵ Director: David Twohy, production year:2000

⁵⁶ Riddick in *Pitch Black*.

⁵⁷ Terry M. Levi (ed.), *Handbook of Attachment Interventions*, p. 7.

found something odd about him and that the other children sort of feared him. So he might have used his powers to get what he wanted from the other children as a form of communication or cry for social contact. But considering his behaviour and the manner in which he speaks to Professor Dumbledore at their first meeting, would suggest that his social connection with the other children was based on Tom trying out his special skills. It also suggests that the experiments he conducted concerning his skills were of a vicious sort. He used his abilities towards the other children with malice, which a little box with trinkets taken from the other children, most likely as a souvenir of what he has managed to accomplish towards these children, can be considered as items of triumph. So already then did he show signs of being a mean and inconsiderate person.

In our every day society we encounter mean people, whether it would be in school, at work or in a grocery store. Some of them are just plain mean, whereas others can change their behaviour with the right set of tools. A mean and obnoxious little pupil can become a sweet, nice and helpful little person when the cause for such bad behaviour is taken away. It could be insecurity concerning the school, the teachers or his/her fellow pupils. Perhaps a conversation or a change of school environment is the right tool for this particular pupil. We cannot always know the trigger for bad and malicious behaviour, but sometimes we do and in those cases there are possibilities to make changes. In Tom Marvolo Riddle's case a change of environment was about to take place as he met with Professor Dumbledore. At first Tom suspected his visitor to be a doctor as he believes that the matron of the orphanage, Mrs Cole, wants him to be looked at. So apparently Tom knows there's something different about him, something the others would not consider to be normal. This belief led him to put up his defences by trying to use a commanding tone, although unsuccessful, towards Professor Dumbledore⁵⁸. When informed that Professor Dumbledore is offering him a place at Hogwarts, he becomes furious believing that he will be taken to an asylum for insane people. Tom does not consider himself to be crazy or insane. He is well aware of himself and what he can do, which he expresses clearly when Professor Dumbledore explains that no one will force him to attend this school.

⁵⁸ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 252.

“I’d like to see them try,” sneered Riddle.”⁵⁹

Tom shows himself as being very independent and self-conscious. He is very aware of his surrounding and the people in it. He understand fairly fast that in order to gain what he wants he would need to change his attitude, his face towards other people. His first step is already taken at the meeting with Professor Dumbledore. His commanding and obnoxious behaviour at the beginning of the meeting changes when he learns more about his abilities and the school. His manner quickly changes when Professor Dumbledore shows him magic by confronting him with the box of trinkets taken from the other children. He becomes polite and respectful, although his heart might not have been in it.

As mentioned earlier, a change of environment can help turn a bad behaviour into a good behaviour and of course vice versa. In the case of Tom it would appear that that was exactly what happened. He attended Hogwarts and the staff there, all but Professor Dumbledore as far as we know, thought of him as a polite, charming and talented young boy who wanted to learn as much as possible. He had a way of talking people into what he wanted as he did with the earlier mentioned Professor Slughorn and the information concerning Horcruxes. He had a large group of followers as well among the students, some of which would later be known as Death Eaters. Finding information about Tom and his life at Hogwarts and outside of the school proved to be difficult. Either people refused to talk about him, out of fear or loyalty, or their memories had been wiped clean of any memories of Tom with a memory charm. It would seem that Tom made an effort in covering his tracks well. Common sense would say that anyone who makes such an effort in covering his tracks would be up to something wicked, or hiding from someone bad, the latter not being the case of Tom Marvolo Riddle.

It was however discovered that Tom Marvolo Riddle began to use the name Lord Voldemort amongst his followers already at Hogwarth’s. This change came as a consequence of Tom not finding any trace of his father, Tom Riddle Senior, having ever attended Hogwarth’s and therefore he was no wizard. He was obsessed in finding out about his ancestry and having searched for some trace of the name Marvolo, he discovered the ancestry

⁵⁹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 253.

line of Slytherin in which he realized he was a part of. He visited Morfin, his uncle, and learned that Marvolo had died and that the Riddles still resided in the area. Later that day the Riddles were found dead, with no trace concerning the cause of death according to the muggles. The Ministry of Magic, however, found evidence of the Avada Kedavra Curse and they also got a confession from Morfin. The ring that had the Peverell coat of arms on it, which Morfin had inherited from his father, had, unknowingly by others, been taken by Tom. This all happened during the summer of Tom's sixteenth year. So Tom was a murderer at a young age, although we do not know if he had killed anyone during his earlier years except a pet rabbit at the orphanage.

Thus it seems that Tom's malicious behaviour did not change during the years at Hogwarth's, he just changed his appearance outwards, being charming and talented and yet very cunning. His years at Hogwarts resulted in Tom being appointed, prefect and head boy, getting top marks at every examination he took and receiving a special award for discovering who had opened up the Chamber of Secrets. This award was not rightfully his as the blame was laid on Hagrid, present day Hogwarts' Keeper of Keys and Grounds and the Care of Magical Creatures teacher, when it was Tom himself, as Slytherin's heir, who had opened up the chamber and released the horror that dwelled there. However, this talented boy was expected by everyone to become something great, which he eventually did however evil it was.

After his education at Hogwarts Tom Marvolo Riddle first asked if there was a position available at there as a teacher, but he was turned down as he was too young. It is rather surprising in a way that someone as talented as him, and as charming as people did find him, would want to teach at Howarth's. But then again, Hogwarth's was the place that was the closest to home for him and it is filled with magic from the days of the founders and has many secrets. It was probably the only place he had any kind of emotional attachments to. But as he was turned down at Hogwarth's he began to work at a shop called Borgin and Burkes, which sells different dark objects. This was a surprise for many, but a very clever move from Tom. In this way he learnt about different artefacts that were unusual as well as powerful, and came across two objects which he coveted, Slytherin's locket which had once belonged to his mother, and the cup of Helga Hufflepuff. As his job was to persuade people to sell their special artefacts to Borgin and Burkes, these two objects were not for sale and Tom would

want them for himself. Thus he killed the present owner of these objects, Hepzibah Smith, and her house-elf confessed to the murder. By the time Hepzibah Smith's relatives discovered that there were two objects missing, Tom was long gone. The fact that he didn't hang around once he had gotten what he wanted is a very common feature in the behaviour of a psychopath⁶⁰.

So he had once again killed and made someone else confessing to the murder, which clearly shows that he knows the difference between wrong and right. The magpie-tendency we witnessed during his younger years also comes to show in this murder as he obtained two trophies or souvenirs, although these were of special importance to him considering their original owners. The trait of his earlier days of using his abilities to obtain what he wanted has remained with him just like the tendency to take and keep items that belonged to his victims. What we see here is a criminal behaviour which is a part of him, not induced by others. He himself has chosen the action to obtain his desire, and he chose to act upon it, and knowing the consequences of his actions he also covered his tracks very well. Could this suggest that Tom has what we might refer to as a criminal mind? He murders with intent, he steals with intent as well as covering his tracks intentionally, so in other words it would seem that he wanted to do these acts of crime. We do not know if he had killed anyone between the murder of the Riddles and the murder of Hepzibah Smith, but afterwards his murderous deeds increased just like his powers and knowledge within the Dark Arts.

Fear and death soon followed the footprints of Tom Marvolo Riddle, but now he became known as Lord Voldemort. Another feature that makes Lord Voldemort differ from what we would refer to as normal people is the lack of emotion. We do hear of him expressing some sort of feeling; anger, loathing, wild frenzy, but not any form of happiness or other emotions that characterises human nature. When he encounters a barrier of some sort, or surprises, he usually stays expressionless.

“He raised his glass as though toasting Voldemort, whose face remained expressionless. Nevertheless, Harry felt the atmosphere in the room change subtly: Dumbledore’s refusal to use Voldemort’s chosen name was refusal to allow

⁶⁰ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*.

Voldemort to dictate the terms of the meeting, and Harry could tell that Voldemort took it as such.”⁶¹

Only on a few occasions does he show a genuine surprise at something, indicating that he is very much in control of the events around him and the chain reaction that follows an action. He anticipates the outcome of his actions before he acts, and thus he has already reacted to a counter action. But his anticipation always goes in his favour and he never considers that he could fail. The reason for this is probably due to the fact that he seldom fails. He is rather used to getting what he wants using his powers to obtain it or spread fear in those he encounters or surrounds himself with. Fear seems to be an important factor when it comes to bad and evil deeds. Evil creates fear, which again leads to power. The one who creates fear has power over the ones who fear, but it also works the other way around. If one can control fear, those who execute fear no longer have any power over you. The unknown usually creates fear in people. Those who are afraid of Lord Voldemort fear him because they know what he is capable of, while at the same time they have no true knowledge of the extent of his powers. This gives Lord Voldemort the upper hand, making him very powerful while at the same time rather vulnerable.

A Comparison – Lord Voldemort and Other Fictional Characters

“Call him Voldemort, Harry. Always use the proper name for things. Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.”⁶²

Lord Voldemort versus Darth Vader

On the other hand, fear can cause evil. Often when you are afraid your self-defence system awakes and you anticipate something uncomfortable while becoming more aggressive. One can often find that big bullies become bullies to hide their own fears and low self-esteem.

⁶¹ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, p. 414.

⁶² J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, p. 216.

Another fictional character that shares the feature of causing fear in people through exceptional and powerful abilities is Anakin Skywalker who transforms himself into Darth Vader, in the *Star Wars*⁶³ movies. Darth Vader, like Lord Voldemort, is moving with the dark side, killing and causing much pain. But he was not always like that. Unfortunately for Anakin Skywalker, he did not heed the words of Jedi Master Yoda.

*“Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering.”*⁶⁴

The main thing that drives Tom Marvolo Riddle into becoming Lord Voldemort is his quest for immortality, his fear of death. Anakin Skywalker had the same fear. However, unlike Tom Marvolo Riddle who searched for immortality for himself, Anakin Skywalker searched for a way to give life to the ones he loved. He lost his mother and his wife to death, a pain that was so unbearable that he became a servant of the dark forces.

Although Lord Voldemort cannot be parallel compared to the *Star Wars* character Darth Vader, there are similarities. Darth Vader was once known as Anakin Skywalker, just like Lord Voldemort was once Tom Marvolo Riddle. Both characters went through a radical change in attitude, behaviour and looks. Their driving force is the possibility of defeating death. Tom Marvolo Riddle and Anakin Skywalker lost their mothers without the possibility of rescuing them. Tom Marvolo Riddle never knew his mother, and when finding out she was a wizard but still died, he looked upon her as weak and became determined to defeat death, although not to save anyone but himself. In the case of Anakin Skywalker, the mother was captured and tortured by the Sand People, and as Anakin came for her rescue, he, with the knowledge of the Force, could not stop her from dying in his arms. This turned him on his path towards Darth Vader.

The transformation into their alter ego happened in much the same way. They were both very talented in their fields, had a love for power and a quest to defeat death. The difference in their change has the keyword love. Tom Marvolo Riddle did not seek immortality to save anyone but himself. He wanted to be rid of any kind of weakness and

⁶³ Director: George Lucas, production years: 1977, 1980, 1983, 1999, 2002, 2005.

⁶⁴ Yoda in *Phantom Menace*, part 4 of the *Star Wars* saga.

considered dying as one of them. The quest for immortality was for him alone. Anakin Skywalker on the other hand, sought an escape from death of the ones he loved, his mother, Shmi, and his wife, Padmé. He loved them and wanted them to be alive and well.

Unfortunately his well-meanings did not turn out the way he had wished for and along the way he instead of saving his wife became responsible for her death.

As both Tom Marvolo Riddle and Anakin Skywalker grow up and their talents evolve, so does their attitude towards life. They are both charming and polite, yet their success makes them arrogant and condescending. The choices they make that lead them towards the path of transformation and the dark side is shown in their outward appearances, their faces. There is a saying that the eyes mirror the souls, and that is very much what the creators of these characters portray as well. Anakin Skywalker's eyes become yellow, demon-like, and the whites becoming reddish. The eyes of Lord Voldemort are described as red with slits like a cat. They both gain eyes that are no longer human-like. And as the transformation becomes complete, Anakin Skywalker is encased in a body-like armour after having been severely burned and molested during a fight with Obi-Wan Kenobi, a fighter of the good side. And Lord Voldemort's looks changes from a handsome man to a thin, skull-like figure with snake-like nostril and unnatural long fingers.

In comparing these two characters one will find that there are more differences between them than there are similarities. In the end Darth Vader is rescued by his son Luke, but he also helped saving himself. The power that turned Darth Vader into Anakin Skywalker again is the very same power that Professor Dumbledore speaks of and Lord Voldemort rejects. This power, love, and Lord Voldemort's ignorance and lack of understanding become his downfall. Thus, one can say that Lord Voldemort underestimated a power which he considered weak and useless, whereas he miscalculated the power of immortality. Darth Vader manages to show remorse and is taken back into the warmth so to speak. The faith of Lord Voldemort is then more similar to the faith of Darth Sidious, the Emperor and Dark Lord in the *Star Wars* saga. Darth Sidious dies by the hand of his very own servant, Darth Vader who has then turned side. In other words he brought about his own demise, just like Lord Voldemort.

Lord Voldemort *versus* Sauron

Another fantasy character that has similarities with Lord Voldemort is Sauron, the Dark Lord of Mordor, from the fantasy world of J. R. R. Tolkien. Sauron too is a powerful and evil character in the world of fantasy. In *the Lord of the Rings* he is described as a burning eye that is ever watchful. But he wasn't always like that. Sauron was once a spirit, a Maia, created by the One, Eru, and took part in the creating of the world. He was not the one who began evil, but he eventually followed its footsteps. Melkor, one of the Valar, the more powerful spirits created by Eru, first began to put into being his own desires disrupting the harmony which the other Valar and Maia were creating. Melkor was powerful and Sauron fell for his influence and power. But like the character of Anakin Skywalker, Sauron did not start off as an evil creation.

“For nothing is evil in the beginning. Even Sauron was not so.”⁶⁵

Sauron was a Maia who played the tunes given by the One to create the world. But Melkor wanted to play his own tunes, and Sauron listened and became influenced. Thus he began to play with the tune of Melkor. Later both the Valar and the Maia were allowed to step down to the world they had created. Melkor managed to seduce Sauron into becoming one of his allies. At first it would seem that he did not do Melkor's bidding, but eventually Sauron showed his true colours. He admired the power of Melkor, but made no move to attain it, not until Melkor was cast away from the world. Then he slowly became a dark and evil power. With his talents and cunning ways he managed to forge a ring that would control the other rings that the leaders of the other races kept. After a massive battle between Sauron with his allies of evil and the other races on the good side, Sauron was defeated and left as nothing but a spirit who waited until his time was coming where he could rise again.

So far, the resemblances between Sauron and Lord Voldemort are few. Unlike Lord Voldemort, Sauron was seduced by someone with a greater power. Lord Voldemort however, searched for this greater power and did just about anything to get it. Sauron once had a master, whereas Lord Voldemort had always been his own master, having servants rather than being one. But charming words and the ability to persuade others into believing that they were

⁶⁵ J. R. R. Tolkien, *the Lord of the Rings*, p. 261.

good-natured they both had in common. Something else that they share is that they both become defeated just at their moment of triumph, not only once, but twice. Sauron's first attempt to gain power over Middle-earth killed his bodily self and made him a dormant spirit. This is practically the same thing that happened to Lord Voldemort. He went to kill the Potters, at a moment in which he believed in total success and power in the wizarding world, but became a maimed and dormant spirit. Then they both regained much power, but yet again, at a moment where they believed to be triumphant, they were both defeated. But this time around they were annihilated.

When talking about their outward appearances, they both looked good and charming. Sauron had the ability to shape shift, and chose a beautiful appearance which was deceiving, just like Lord Voldemort. But as time went by and the more doings of evil they preformed, their looks changed drastically and none were beautiful to look at. And before their total destruction, the one thing that stand out for the both of them, are the eyes. The eyes of Lord Voldemort have already been described earlier. Sauron, however, came to be described as a lidless eye that is ever watchful⁶⁶. Once again the eyes seem to play an important part in portraying a character, whether good or evil. We often find that in literature and film the good characters have big beautiful eyes, whereas the bad characters have dark, yellow demon-like eyes or similar descriptions. And as eye contact is an important feature in human contact, the portrayal of a character's eyes should be no surprise.

In comparing Lord Voldemort with other fictional characters we find that the chosen fictional characters have things in common with Lord Voldemort and one another. But none of them can be truly compared to him. Most of these characters start out as good characters turning away from the good side to follow the path of the dark forces. So it looks as if Lord Voldemort has more in common with Darth Sidious and Melkor than with Darth Vader and Sauron. Whether Darth Sidious was a good character in his younger days we do not know, but we do know that Melkor began playing off tune on his own choosing a path by himself. As we do not know much about Darth Sidious' early life, we will let him be in the comparison of Lord Voldemort and other dark figures. Melkor, however, was created by the One. Does that mean that the One deliberately created Melkor into being an independent Valar that would

⁶⁶ J. R. R. Tolkien, *the Lord of the Rings*.

choose an evil path? To put it in other words one might ask if God deliberately created some people that would walk the dark path and cause much pain and evil. Or is it the choice people have to choose their own path that comes to show?

Lord Voldemort *versus* Dr Faustus

Dr. Faustus is another fictional character that one can compare with Lord Voldemort. One of the questions that have been posed earlier is whether or not one can choose to take a good path or an evil path, and whether Lord Voldemort chose his path because he wanted to? Faustus is a character who has studied just about everything worth studying, and he wants more. He wants amongst others the knowledge of immortality. In gaining this knowledge he makes a pact with Lucifer. In this pact Faustus learns a great deal of the things he desired, and will be giving his soul to Lucifer at the end. So far there are many similarities between Faustus and Lord Voldemort. Just like Faustus, Lord Voldemort also studied to the end the things he felt was worth studying, and he too searched for a way to become immortal. And very much like Faustus he sells his soul to become immortal. Instead of bargaining with Lucifer, Lord Voldemort severs his soul into several pieces.

So far they have both chosen the same path in life. But Faustus had, on several occasions, second thoughts as so-called divine interventions tried to tell him to repent and not continue on the chosen path. And time and time again did he choose to continue. Lord Voldemort also came upon interventions as Professor Dumbledore asked him to take another path⁶⁷ as well as Harry Potter who tries to convince him to repent, but they were talking to deaf ears. Lord Voldemort never had any second thoughts on anything that he did. He only saw himself ruling the wizard world as the greatest and most powerful wizard ever.

*“But Faustus’ offence can ne’er be pardoned! The serpent that tempted Eve may be saved, but not Faustus.”*⁶⁸

⁶⁷ J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*.

⁶⁸ Gill, Roma (ed.), *Dr Faustus – Christopher Marlowe*, p. 64.

Although the outcome of the choices of both Faustus and Lord Voldemort were practically the same, one major difference is shown between them. Faustus thought on several occasions to repent, to turn away from Lucifer, but felt he had come too far to be able to receive forgiveness and thus followed Lucifer to the end. Lord Voldemort never once thought of repenting or of changing his ways, he remained faithful to himself to the very end.

In Christianity, Lucifer has always been portrayed as the evil one. But he is not God's nemesis; it is rather the other way around. There are other names such as; the Devil, Satan, Morning Star and so on that is given to Lucifer or the one that opposes God, but he was not a bad character in the beginning. But being displeased with the way God ran things so to speak, he rebelled against his creator and was thus cast down from the heavenly bliss. And that being a torment he created a world, what we call Hell, which would be the counterpart to Heaven. So not even the one we think of as bad guy number one can really be compared to Lord Voldemort.

Has the author J. K. Rowling really created a character that is truly evil personified or are there other features that have been overlooked? Analysing someone, whether it be fictional or real, is not an easy process. There are many things to take into consideration such as the setting, the surroundings, biology and belief. One can choose to consider Lord Voldemort as a truly evil character or that he became evil due to other circumstances that can or cannot be helped.

Lord Voldemort – an Evil Being?

In learning about Tom Marvolo Riddle, and later Lord Voldemort, one can describe him as a psychopath.

“Psychopaths are social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, ... Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret.”⁶⁹

Tom Marvolo Riddle would most likely in our world, without the magical abilities, have been a juvenile delinquent. He lies, steals and charms his way through life. This we have witnessed throughout the Harry Potter novels. He stole from the other children at the orphanage and kept the things for himself. His lies are shown on several occasions such as when he makes Severus Snape believe that he would not hurt Lily Potter, or when he asks Professor Dumbledore for a teaching position at Hogwarth’s, when what he really came there for was to hide one of his Horcrux. And whenever he chose to he could be very handsome and charming. He is cunning in his ways to obtain what he wants, and he lacks the ability of empathy. He can hurt other people and it would not matter to him other than that he has managed to show some of his powers which is a satisfaction for him. In other words he is a power hungry being that sees nothing but his own ego. He is a violent person that enjoys seeing others being hurt through his bidding, whether he performs the violent act himself or orders someone else to do it. It is not the violent act itself that Lord Voldemort thrives on, it is the power he has to do so that gives him pleasure.

One can also consider him a sociopath, which is a similar term to psychopath but refers more to the inflictions done by social forces and early experiences⁷⁰. He has not got what we would define as friends, but rather followers who stay with him due to either fear or some sort of admiration. Neither as a child or an adult does he need the companionship of other people. This trait we already witnessed when he refused Professor Dumbledore’s offer to guide him to the train which was to take him to Hogwarts. As already mentioned he lacks

⁶⁹ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. xi.

⁷⁰ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. 23.

empathy and he does not understand the emotions that can bind people together, especially not love.

“.. a deeply disturbing inability to care about the pain and suffering experienced by others – in short, a complete lack of empathy, the prerequisite for love.”⁷¹

This is clearly shown on several occasions. It is this failure to understand the meaning and power of love that brings him down when he attempt to kill Harry Potter the first time. It is also that which makes him lose one of his faithful servants, Severus Snape. Lord Voldemort cannot understand that Snape loves someone so that other women mean nothing to him. Lord Voldemort understands only that there is a woman who has caught Snape’s interest and that there most likely will be others as other women exist.

During his final moments Harry Potter, Lord Voldemort’s nemesis, tries to persuade him to show some remorse. But as the “mental case” that he is, he cannot show remorse as he does not understand what it is. Lord Voldemort only understands power, how to use it and how to obtain it. All he ever wants is power, control and immortality. His quest for immortality is a factor of his fear of death. Dying is a weakness that a great and powerful wizard such as Lord Voldemort should not have. To Lord Voldemort, being immortal would mean to have conquered his fear and the world.

Summing Up

In this thesis I have looked at the problem of evil, the free will and the connection between them. And I have come to the conclusion that neither the problem of evil nor the question of free will can be truly answered as it is a matter of opinion and belief depending on ones own background and the influences one bears. The origin of evil can in Christianity be blamed on Lucifer, the downfall of man due to Adam and Eve, or the choices that man is able and capable of making. Whether or not God is responsible for evil is a matter for others to study if it is in their interest. Nevertheless, evil can be described as actions that are too horrible to comprehend. Acts that are characterised as bad can be anything from telling a white lie to

⁷¹ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. 6.

stealing someone's car. The cartoon character *Dennis – the Menace* is a well-known figure which is often up to mischief, just as Calvin in *Calvin and Hobbes*. These are two young boys that do a lot of mischievous things, yet they are excused as they are both young, and we find humour in the things they do. And most importantly, they don't stretch the boundaries of our sanity to a length where it comes incomprehensible or totally unacceptable. When it comes to defining what is evil, it comes down to a matter of defining the act at hand. Murder is a violent act, and a bad one. But it does not necessarily mean an act of evil as we would define it, as the murder could have happened as an act of self-defence or even an accident. In other words, describing an evil act is a matter of definition. But evil itself can be recognized as something beyond our comprehension.

The main evil character in the Harry Potter novels is Lord Voldemort. In many ways one can say that he was born evil, especially after having looked at his life and his actions. But his behaviour is the one of an ill person. If he had been a real person he would most likely have been taken care of by the authorities in one way or another. Yet, often one can find that persons like Lord Voldemort, are often the ones who stay outside the bars and confinements that exist.

“Not surprisingly, many psychopaths are criminals, but many others remain out of prison, using their charm and chameleonlike abilities to cut a wide swath through society and leaving a wake of ruined lives behind them.”⁷²

Depending on his actions and the time he might have been captured he would probably have ended his life in jail or in a mental hospital. Lord Voldemort's actions are evil, but he himself would not consider them as evil. He would consider his actions as a success and proof of his abilities of power. Thus, we would in real life refer to Lord Voldemort as mentally ill, probably beyond any chance of recovery to normal. Considering his childhood, Lord Voldemort was conceived, not out of love between his parents, but through a love-potion. He did not experience love during the crucial years of growing up as his mother had died shortly after his birth. Things might have turned out differently if his mother had survived and raised

⁷² Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. 2.

him as she seemed to be a loving and caring person⁷³. The sociopathic behaviour that we have seen throughout his life might not have been much of an issue if his mother had been there for him, still such behaviour may be due to genetic flaws, which could be the case considering the history of inbreeding in Lord Voldemort's ancestry.

When it comes to his psychopathic behaviour, there might not be much one could have done to help him. Psychopaths are usually considered to be incurable⁷⁴, and thus, his upbringing might not have meant all that much when concerning his behaviour and actions. He might have, however, been picked by the Ministry of Magic at a much earlier stage and thus prevented the escalation of violence that signified the era in which Lord Voldemort reigned. He might then have spent the remainder of his years in Azkaban or at St Mungo's Hospital for Magical Maladies and Injuries, the wizarding hospital, depending on his actions before his capture. But Lord Voldemort was never captured. Instead he roamed free and performed his evildoing as he pleased without any concern for retribution, which is another psychopathic feature, the belief of being superior and undefeatable. And no matter how you look at it, he chose his own path in life as he chose the actions in his life.

*“Psychopaths are not disoriented or out of touch with reality, nor do they experience the delusions, hallucinations, or intense subjective distress that characterize most other mental disorders. Unlike psychotic individuals, psychopaths are rational and aware of what they are doing and why. Their behaviour is the result of choice, freely exercised.”*⁷⁵

He might not have had the opportunities of a normal life, but he knew what the society he lived in considered to be good or bad acts, and he also knew there would be consequences of the actions that he performed. He just lacked empathy as well as the ability to consider that the consequences might not always go in his favour.

Through the work on this thesis I have shown that evil is a matter of definition, and that Lord Voldemort is considered evil. He did not manage to stay within the regulations and

⁷³ Terry M. Levy (ed.), *Handbook of Attachment Interventions*.

⁷⁴ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*.

⁷⁵ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. 22.

norms of a normal society. It would, however, be unfair to say that Lord Voldemort chose to be evil and thus is an evil being. He shows clear signs of being mentally ill in some way, an anomaly in the society he was born in. Yet there were no help to be found for his condition. The wizarding community considered him a great but evil wizard, but not a mentally ill person. Does that mean that Lord Voldemort can be excused, and that one can forgive him and the evil things he did? I would say that there is no excuse for his actions as he on several occasions knew that his actions were wrong. And as mentioned earlier, the behaviour of a psychopath is a result of choice which is freely exercised⁷⁶.

Can one be born evil? Again I would say that the answer would depend on how we define evil. Lord Voldemort was in a way born evil as his abnormal traits already showed themselves as a young boy. But in studying his life and his actions, he was not born evil but rather born with a mental illness, or illnesses, which might not be curable, nor was he given any kind of help. He attended the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, in the House of Slytherin, which sought out the personal traits that Tom Marvolo Riddle possessed. Therefore looking at a larger picture, all the pain and suffering that Lord Voldemort inflicted on the wizarding community, as well as the muggle community, the wizarding community itself is in a way partly responsible for. No one came to his aid, and no one came to stop him before the damages were already done. Lord Voldemort was perhaps one of the most evil wizards the wizarding community had seen in hundreds of years, but that is only due to the fact that they let him.

During my research I have found nothing that proves that one can be born evil, nor have I found evidence of the opposite. I have, however, come to the conclusion that evil is defined according to the social norms that reside within a society. The definitions of a psychopath, a sociopath or any other labels one may have on an individual who does not perform according to the given social norms are defined by the society's standards of a well-behaved normal individual. In our world, as well as the wizarding world in the Harry Potter novels, Lord Voldemort is an evil-behaving person who lacks an understanding of the social norms and the ability to conform to them. He may have been the most feared wizard in a long time in the wizarding community, just like he would have been a feared person, with or

⁷⁶ Robert D. Hare, *Without Conscience – the Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us*, p. 22.

without his magical abilities, in our world as well. But whether he became evil due to certain circumstances is a question that is difficult to genuinely answer. Looking at his background as well as the genetics it is plausible that he could not have been nor acted in any other way.

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