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“Every Child in Our World Will Know His Name”

Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone by J. K. Rowling

- A Future Children’s Classic –

“Magical” is the quality that best captures the essence of the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling; the heptalogy has enchanted young and old ever since it was first published in the 1990s. Julia Eccleshare, journalist of children’s books, argues that “[t]he publishing phenomenon of Harry Potter [has] proved that the traditional themes of fantasy and make-believe still have the power to attract new readers and bridge the gap between young and old” (*Beatrix Potter* 100). The present writer shares Eccleshare’s view, arguing that the first novel in the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (hereafter referred to as *The Stone*), is well on its way to becoming a children’s classic. Belonging to the high fantasy genre, it contains many of the ingredients of a true classic, including the presence of parallel worlds, a variety of problems to which the reader can relate and most importantly of all, the eternal conflict between “good” and “evil”. It is on the latter aspect that this essay focuses because of the many forms of “evil” that are featured in the novel. To understand the complexity of the relationship between “good” and “evil”, which is personified by Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort and exemplified in Harry’s determination to be “good” whatever the price, four additional “evil” characters within the two parallel worlds will also be discussed: Mr and Mrs Dursley together with their son Dudley from the real “muggle” world, and Draco Malfoy from the “magical” wizard world. Further, the importance of friendship and parenthood will be addressed as they too are important ingredients in the never-ending fight between “good” and “evil”.

The eternal struggle between “good” and “evil” will be illustrated by close reading of selected passages in *The Stone*, as well as by using Hume’s theory about the “fear of the unknown”. The essence of Hume’s theory is that the exposure of invisible and unknown enemies triggers the imagination and often leads to fear of what cannot be seen (Hume, n.pag.)¹ as demonstrated below when treating the wizards’ disquietude concerning Voldemort’s situation and location. The working definitions of “good” and “evil” are based on those of the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. Someone “good” is generally admired as one who possesses such desirable qualities as loyalty, kindness and morality, while an “evil” person acts in immoral ways, tends to cause great harm, and exerts malignant influences.

As shown in the introduction above, good and evil are represented by inhabitants of the two parallel worlds: the muggle world and the wizard world. “Muggles” are described by Hagrid,

¹ Further information about Hume’s theory can be found on <http://www.english.upenn.edu/~mgamer/Etexts/hume.superstition.html>.

the Keeper of Keys and Grounds at Hogwarts, as “non-magic folk” (*The Stone* 62). Indeed, according to the *Urban Dictionary*, the expression originates from the *Harry Potter* series. Unlike “muggles”, the word “magic” has many definitions. In this essay it is regarded as “a power that allows people (such as witches and wizards) to do impossible things by saying special words or performing special actions” (*Merriam-Webster*). Involving both worlds in portraying different forms of evil *The Stone* proposes a new idea compared to contemporary children’s classics, further developed below (p. 3), and this is also a contributor to the novel becoming a future children’s classic. Professor Rebecca Lukens proposes the definition of children’s classics as “books that have worn well, attracting readers from one generation to the next” (30). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* supports Lukens’s theory saying that a classic is a novel that “has been popular for a long time” and further adds that a classic is “to be considered [as] one of the best of its kind”. Whether or not *The Stone* will reach the status of a children’s classic has been discussed in society and media ever since its first publication. The debate has divided people in two camps; the ones in favor of the novel becoming a children’s classic and the ones of the contradictory opinion.

When *The Stone* was first published, *The Scotsman* was quick to praise the novel for its demanding, yet entertaining plot, arguing that it “has all the makings of a classic” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 10). Since then, several critics have supported *The Scotsman*’s stand: three of these are journalist Julia Eccleshare, writer and speaker John Granger, and the author and mythologist David Colbert. All three agree on that *The Stone* and the following six novels in the series have the potential of becoming children’s classics due to their many fantasy elements, their references to other novels within the genre and the many themes for readers to relate to. According to Eccleshare the main reason for the novels not being treated as classics today is that they “have [yet] not had the opportunity to prove that they will last” (*A Guide* 34). This essay agrees with Eccleshare, Granger and Colbert that the *Potter* novels will become future children’s classics, but focus is here on the first novel and on the importance of the eternal battle between good and evil.

Despite its many readers, the power to change the character of the bestseller lists (Smith n.pag.) and breaking boundaries between young and old readers, writer Richard Abanes and Yale professor Harold Bloom question if *The Stone* should or will be continually read by children and become a children’s classic. In contrast to the authors mentioned above, Abanes, who discusses the novel(s) from a Christian perspective, condemns *The Stone*. In an interview with Belinda Elliott, Abanes argues that the novel is “dangerous” giving real references to

“astrology, clairvoyance, and numerology” (n.pag.), which children can find more information about in the bookshops and because “children like to copy what they think is cool” (n.pag.). Abanes, along with a number of Christian groups, fears that children reading the *Potter* novels will be influenced to start using dark arts themselves by imitating the actions of the characters in the novel. Bloom does not claim that the novel is harmful to children, but that there is nothing special about *The Stone*, that it is not “well written” (3) and that Rowling has “borrowed” ideas from other authors, such as J.R.R. Tolkien. Bloom’s reason for anyone reading the novel is “if you cannot be persuaded to read anything better” (3). He argues that it is just a passing fashion reading the *Potter* novel, a statement reflecting that the novel does not deserve the title “children’s classic”.

Two novels that have reached the status of children’s classics and that share certain characteristics with *The Stone*, are C.S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Astrid Lindgren’s *Mio, My Son*² (hereafter referred to as *The Lion* and *Mio*). The three novels, with their realistic portrayals of an imaginary world and the conflict between good and evil, contain the most important ingredients of high fantasy novels (Lukens 32). Furthermore, all three novels have the same main plot: a good child preparing for the final battle with the evil rulers^{3,4}. Supporting *The Stone* to reach the status of a children’s classic are the joint attributes to the novels mentioned above and the fact that Rowling has developed the idea and the depth of the intrigue of the novel by giving the “real” world, i.e. the muggle world, a larger role than its predecessors *The Lion* and *Mio*. The protagonist of *The Stone* is brought up with evil, meeting it in both the primary and secondary worlds, while *The Lion* and *Mio* both limit themselves to treating evil within the imaginary worlds of Narnia and Farawayland⁵. Through elaborating the muggle world readers learn to know Harry as “an ordinary kid who grows up in an ordinary (if dreadful) suburban family, and not in a fairy-tale land” (Moore 1), giving them someone “real” to identify with; but it also deepens the role of evil expressing that evil exists in many different places and forms.

² On J. K. Rowling’s website, www.jkrowling.com, under the headline *Early Influences*, it is said that Rowling “was a voracious reader” as a child and that *The Lion* was well-read by her. Information about Rowling reading *Mio*, however, has not been found, but there are several resemblances to *The Stone*.

³ The Pevensie children fighting the White Witch in *The Lion, Mio* mantling the role to defeat the cruel Sir Kato in *Mio* and Harry battling against Lord Voldemort in *The Stone*.

⁴ Further fights between a good child and evil are, for example, the battle between Frodo and Gollum in the trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* by JRR Tolkien (1954) and between Alice and Jabberwocky in *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll (1865).

⁵ Both the Pevensie children in *The Lion* and Mio in *Mio* are under hard conditions within the “real” world as the prior have been separated from their parents due to an ongoing war (Lewis 3) and the latter not feeling wanted by his foster parents (Lindgren 10). However, as further details from the “real” world are sparse in these two novels, it is to be considered that the battle against evil is concentrated to the magical world.

Although born into the wizard world, raised in the other and at the age of eleven brought back to the wizard world, Harry is not torn between the two worlds. One explanation for this is Harry’s ten miserable years in the muggle world, living with his evil relatives the Dursleys. In chapters two and three of *The Stone* it is revealed that Harry is treated differently compared to his cousin Dudley; he hardly receives any birthday presents, for example, while Dudley is given 37 and is still not content (*The Stone* 28); he has to live in a cupboard under the staircase while Dudley has two rooms (*The Stone* 45); and most hurtful of all, he is not noticed at all by his aunt and uncle, as shown in the passage where Dudley’s photographs flood the mantelpiece while there are none of Harry (*The Stone* 25). Professor Alison Lurie describes such discrimination as Harry being in a “classic Cinderlad situation” (114), i.e. he is a poor, lonely orphaned child who is despised and abused by his relatives. The neglect and maltreatment of Harry, who himself is obligated to do as he is told, without asking questions (*The Stone* 27), reveals why he feels unwanted and wishes to belong to another society or in this case, to another world.

When the magical world of Hogwarts is revealed to Harry on his eleventh birthday (*The Stone* ch. 4), he embraces the idea of there being something better for him, despite the fact that during the last ten years he has been told differently. Suddenly the dreams he has had about a flying motorbike (*The Stone* 33), a “blinding flash of green light” (*The Stone* 65) and meeting strange people looking familiarly at him (*The Stone* 37) are intelligible. Partly becoming aware of the meaning of his dreams and his past, Harry’s longed for journey to get to know who he really is starts; a journey more than 450 million people have followed (*By the numbers* n.pag.), for the last decade and a half.

Being accepted for who he is and feeling connection to a group, a school, a new society and a new world is not a certainty, but an inner battle for Harry. Never having had a loving family and friends, the latter due to Dudley scaring potential friends off (*The Stone* 38), Harry has never felt appreciation in or affiliation to the muggle world. Corresponding with Cinderella, Harry is proposed a “major life-change” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 16) and as a world where he all his life has been a well-known wizard is introduced, people sympathize with Harry and openheartedly accept him as a hero (*The Stone* 79-80). Harry, however, is not comfortable with this unexpected attention. He worries about being special and about being asked to perform “great things” as he cannot remember anything about the night for which he is famous, the night he defeated Voldemort (*The Stone* 97). Harry feels pressure to prove that he is worthy of his place at Hogwarts and sees it as his responsibility to meet everyone’s

expectations. The uncertainty of what lies ahead of Harry makes him question himself: “‘until Hagrid told me, I didn’t know anything about being a wizard [...] ’I bet I’m the worst in the class’” (*The Stone* 111-112). The fear of not being good enough is, however, not as strong as the odium of staying with the Dursleys. Although “[h]e didn’t know where he was going” (*The Stone* 109) he was sure that “it had to be better than what he was leaving behind” (*The Stone* 109). Despite his worries about not being worthy of his fame and not fitting in at Hogwarts, Harry without any hesitation leaves what he knows for the unknown.

Although Harry is repeatedly reminded of being a famous wizard due to his good actions in defeating Voldemort ten years ago, he does not take his status for granted. Being “out of his depth and surrounded by those who are more knowing” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 23) Harry not only doubts his magical skills, but also his wizard heritage; is he good as were his parents or is he evil like Voldemort? Resembling his parents in looks (*The Stone* 56), but also bearing the mark of Voldemort in the form of a scar on his forehead (*The Stone* 65), Harry shivers as the wand maker Mr Olivander tells Harry the connection between his and Voldemort’s wands (*The Stone* 96); worrying that the scar and the wand are signs of his destined greatness within the dark arts. His worries are additionally reinforced when the sorting hat at the beginning of the school year hesitates in whether Harry should belong to the Gryffindor dormitory where the “courageous and chivalrous” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 77) students belong or to the Slytherins which contains of students that are “cunning and ruthless” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 77). The desire to follow in his parents’ footsteps, choosing Gryffindor in favor of greatness promised if joining Slytherin (where Voldemort once belonged), shows Harry’s values and his determination to be good.

Another sign of Harry not taking his status for granted is when, instead of exploiting his fame due to earlier achievements, he is determined to achieve recognition for present actions. Wanting people to like him for who he is and not for something he cannot even remember, Harry makes friends and works hard both with school and at his quidditch skills. At the end of the year Harry is rewarded as he realizes that “[h]e’d really done something to be proud of now – no one could say he was just a famous name any more” (*The Stone* 243) after winning a quidditch game against the rivals, the Slytherins. Unlike Harry though, the wizard world and the readers do not need the whole year to be convinced that Harry is special: Harry enduring the Dursley’s neglect and maltreatment for ten years, his humble attitude to fame and his questioning himself all contribute to the conviction that Harry represents good in the all-important fight against evil.

Unveiling who is good and who is evil in the very first chapter could spoil the story, but *The Stone* shows that this need not to be the case. The essence of evil is directly described as Voldemort, whose name, meaning “stolen by death” (Törnqvist 194), must remain unspoken due to his evil actions in the past, attacks an innocent baby boy and “steals” his parents away by killing them (*The Stone* 17-19). The boy, Harry Potter, miraculously survives with just a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead, and is immediately pronounced a hero among the wizards (*The Stone* 20). Predictability, according to Eccleshare, is often used in children’s novels to show the optimistic outcome (*A Guide* 16), and having a child defeat evil at once, indicates a positive continuance of the novel. Despite revealing who is good and who is evil, Rowling manages to keep her readers engaged by leaving out information, presenting more questions than answers as shown in the conversation between professor McGonagall and headmaster Dumbledore:

‘That’s not all. They’re saying he tried to kill the Potter’s son, Harry. But – he couldn’t. He couldn’t kill that little boy. No one knows why, or how, but they’re saying that when he couldn’t kill Harry Potter, Voldemort’s power somehow broke – and that’s why he’s gone.’

[...] ‘After all he’s done... all the people he’s killed ... he couldn’t kill a little boy? It’s just astounding ... of all the things to stop him ... but how in the name of heaven did Harry survive?’

‘We can only guess,’ said Dumbledore. ‘We may never know.’ (*The Stone* 19)

McGonagall is the one who asks the question that encompasses the theme of the novel and Dumbledore gives a cryptic answer. The question regarding how one-year-old Harry could survive an attack from the most powerful evil wizard in the magical world, which is hinted at in the apparently simple statement “all the people he’s killed”, indicates that the boy must be very special, but the reader does not understand just how special he is. As McGonagall repeats the words “He couldn’t kill” three times, followed by “that little boy”, “Harry” and “a little boy” the narrator emphasizes that Harry must have extraordinary powers since he has survived the attack. More precisely, he must be either equally, or even more, powerful than Voldemort himself. The reasons for Harry’s power over Voldemort are vague. Not even the wise headmaster Dumbledore, who is the only one Voldemort “was frightened of” (*The Stone* 18), can understand what saved Harry. It is not until the very end of the novel that Dumbledore finds an explanation, namely that it was the love of Harry’s mother that had saved him (*The Stone* 321). The love protecting Harry is also what, according to Eccleshare,

“represents the forces of good in the fight against Voldemort” (*A Guide* 17), indicating that love is more powerful than anything else. Dumbledore revealing that the power of love is Voldemort’s greatest weakness, because he cannot understand it (*The Stone* 321), is a verification that he, unlike Harry, is evil.

Not knowing anything about Voldemort’s background⁶, what caused him to kill people, and what has become of Voldemort contributes to the excitement of the novel and keeps the reader in suspense. It is unclear whether Voldemort is alive or dead. All that is certain is that his power broke and that “he’s gone”, but if that means that he is missing, injured or dead is not clear. At this point of the novel, the fear of the unknown of what is to come plays a more important role in the continuance of the novel, than hiding that Voldemort is evil, as discussed above. According to philosopher David Hume, “infinite unknown evils are dreaded” (n.pag.) by humans, but this can also be considered in *The Stone* as the inhabitants of the wizard world are unsure of Voldemort’s whereabouts. In the same article Hume elaborates by saying that “where real objects of terror are wanting” (n.pag.) we also create imaginary ones, “to whose power and malevolence it sets no limits” (n.pag), meaning that not knowing what to expect makes us imagine all sorts of horrible things that can happen. After having seen a trapdoor under a three-headed dog and hearing a professor talk about it (*The Stone* 199), Harry’s imagination for instance plays tricks on him. Fearing that the teacher is in collusion with Voldemort (*The Stone* 281) and after whatever the dog is guarding, Harry is convinced that the professor earlier has let a troll into the school (*The Stone* 199).

Wondering where Voldemort is, if or when he is going to return and how he anew is going to reach the status of becoming the most powerful wizard of dark arts is intriguing. Still ten years after the conversation seen above between professor McGonagall and Dumbledore, it is a mystery in the magical world what happened to Voldemort. According to Hagrid, some think he died while others believe he is still alive, but too weak to carry on (*The Stone* 66-67). Hagrid himself asserts that Voldemort had not “enough human left in him to die” (*The Stone* 67) and that he is still out there somewhere, weakened by the powers of Harry.

Hagrid’s theory about Voldemort being too weak to act in the last ten years turns out to be correct, but what he does not seem to have considered is the possibility of Voldemort finding a way to reclaim at least some of his power. As already established above, the last chapter

⁶ Information about Voldemort’s background, which is fairly similar to that of Harry’s, can be found in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (1998, pp. 233 and 242), and in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (2000, p. 560-61).

reveals that it was love that saved Harry at the age of one. Furthermore, the same chapter unveils what has become of Voldemort; he is a shadow of his former self and has inhabited the body of Professor Quirrell to regain his strength (*The Stone* 315). When Voldemort first shows himself to Harry, there is nothing human in his chalk-white, snake-like appearance, which gives a deeper meaning to Hagrid’s statement shown at the end of the paragraph above. As Voldemort admits that he has “form only when [he] can share another’s body” (*The Stone* 315) he shows his physical weakness and his dependency on others. This explains why, although Hogwarts is seen as the most secure place in the magical world (*The Stone* 64), he has returned to the school. Voldemort, who is tired of being independent, has returned in order to gain possession of the Philosopher’s stone, which offers eternal life (*The Stone* 238), and the possibility to create a new body.

Not only does Voldemort’s use of another man’s body to stay alive reflect his evilness, but this quality is further consolidated in the last chapter, where it is revealed that he has threatened professor Quirrell and has had him to kill a unicorn and drink its blood (*The Stone* 312 and 316). Both occasions have been addressed before in the novel, but in the first case, Harry misinterpreted the situation, thinking it was another professor who threatened Quirrell in the classroom (*The Stone* 266). In the second case, although physically “reveal[ing] his presence to Harry” (Colbert 78), Harry did not recognize Voldemort, but only saw someone hooded in the forest, drinking the blood of a unicorn, an action, that a centaur describes as follows:

Only one who has nothing to lose, and everything to gain would commit such a crime.
The blood of a unicorn will keep you alive, even if you are an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenceless to save yourself and you will have but a half life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips.
(*The Stone* 279-80)

Ten years earlier Voldemort had killed numerous wizards in order to gain control of the wizard world, but at this stage he is desperate, attacking innocent animals to save himself. “Has nothing to lose”, and “an inch from death” both reflect that the murderer who has committed this ruthless crime of killing unicorns must be someone close to dying, someone eager to live.

In the passage of the Unicorn, Voldemort’s future is also predicted. Not only will Voldemort live “a half life”, but also “a cursed life” if he manages to survive. Once again, more questions

arise than are answered as the reader does not know what is meant by these two expressions. According to Harry, a “full life” incorporates a family, friends and freedom, as illustrated by the degree to which he misses his dead parents and his combined joy and sorrow as he sees them in the Mirror of Erised (*The Stone* ch. 12), friends that stand up for him (*The Stone* 292) and the freedom of exploring new adventures with the aid of the invisible cloak (*The Stone* 218). If this is what is intended, Voldemort’s half and cursed life may lack all three, or at least one or two of these components. It could also mean that he will not live as long as others, or even worse, that he will always be doomed to perform evil acts without the slightest possibility of becoming good in the sense understood here.

The departure of Voldemort is as mysterious as his introduction in the dialogue between professor McGonagall and professor Dumbledore. Once again, it is Dumbledore who provides cryptic information about Voldemort’s status, as he tells Harry that “not being truly alive, he cannot be killed. He left Quirrell to die; he shows just as little mercy to his followers as his enemies” (*The Stone* 320). Dumbledore not only announces that Voldemort is still “out there”, but he emphasizes that he is indeed purely evil. Besides the killing of people and unicorns discussed above, Voldemort is prepared to kill people who help him and stand behind him. In other words, he is capable of doing whatever is needed to attain eternal life and become the leader of the evil wizards.

Although Dumbledore states that Voldemort is not dead, Harry has once again defeated Voldemort through the love of his deceased mother, but also due to eleven years of preparation. As already established (p. 4), Potter’s aunt and uncle are evil in neglecting Harry, but also in not telling him about his supernatural powers and depriving him of information about his dead parents (Lurie 114). Additionally, his cousin is physically abusive, regarding it as a sport to be mean to Harry and even inviting his friends to go “Harry-hunting” (*The Stone* 39). Circumstances so awful that they would break most people are described, but in fact strengthen Harry. The time with the Dursleys forms and prepares him for what awaits him in the world of the wizards and in the battle against Voldemort. The description of Harry being bullied and abused by his relatives is believable, making readers sympathize with Harry. According to Lukens “it is the writer’s obligation to make [a] person’s thoughts and actions believable” (80) when talking about center characters, an obligation Rowling fulfills as she uses Harry’s time spent with the Dursleys to explain the complexity of his personality, thoughts, actions and character development.

Harry, who constantly questions whether his qualities are sufficient for the wizard world, never doubts his position when it comes to right and wrong or good and evil. Despite various temptations, Harry repeatedly proves himself to be good; admired for being “the boy who lived”, turning down Slytherin for Gryffindor as already established (p. 5), and for possessing the desirable qualities of being a good friend no matter sex, race or wealth. Eccleshare argues that Harry’s “isolated childhood” (*A Guide* 76) in the muggle world is the reason to that “he is unfamiliar with the concepts of ‘pure blood’ and the derogatory ‘mud blood’” (*A Guide* 76), explaining why Harry is open-minded in choosing his friends when entering the wizard world. While Harry is eager to make friends, however, he is not willing to make them at any price.

Due to his wizard family going back several generations, Malfoy, a supporter of Voldemort, sees himself as the self-appointed friend of *the* Harry Potter. However, already in Harry’s first meeting with Malfoy, it is clear that the potential friendship is doomed. Within minutes Malfoy “strongly reminded [Harry] of Dudley” (*The Stone* 88), nagging his parents about getting him the latest broomstick. Not only are the two greedy, but Harry quickly notes his bullying tendencies. Malfoy, although he does not know who Harry is, talks in a derogatory way about Hagrid, how muggles should not be allowed to attend Hogwarts and how some of them knew nothing about the school until just a few weeks ago (*The Stone* 88-89). Harry, who can identify closely with the muggles just ridiculed by Malfoy, instantly recognizes Malfoy’s evil nature; the hostility between the two is thus inevitable (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 75). Harry’s first impression of Malfoy does not change, as will be demonstrated in the following two paragraphs, which discuss their second meeting.

Having earlier traduced Hagrid and the muggles in the shop, Malfoy, whose name “derives from the Latin *maleficus*, meaning evil-doer” (Colbert 115), continues putting his foot in it. Malfoy talks condescendingly about poor people as demonstrated in “[m]y father told me all the Weasleys have red hair, freckles and more children than they can afford” (*The Stone* 120). Malfoy continues by saying that “[y]ou’ll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don’t want to go making friends with the wrong sort” (*The Stone* 120). In the first quotation, one can hear the voice of Malfoy’s father and it is evident that Malfoy’s conception of being of the “right” or the “wrong” sort of a wizard has been assimilated from home. Malfoy has been raised with the ideology that not all people are of equal value and with the idea that “privileges of wealth and status depend [...] on merit” (Nel 42). Unlike Harry, who has been brought up with the same values as Malfoy, Malfoy accepts that a person’s status is based on his or her merits and monetary assets. After having heard at

home that the Weasleys are poor, Malfoy, who himself comes from a wealthy family with servants (*The Stone* 270), simply dislikes Ron due to his poverty (Ecchleshare, *A Guide* 75). Despite the fact that Ron is of as pure blood as Malfoy, Malfoy clearly states his mind and warns Harry against “making friends with the wrong sort” without even knowing Ron. Accepting everything his father says, indicates that Malfoy does not think for himself but is easily influenced by others.

In addition to talking condescendingly about Hagrid, muggles and poor people, Malfoy is also quick to change sides. Malfoy, only knowing Harry by the reputation saying that Harry ten years ago defeated Voldemort, pursues Harry due to people on the train talking about him (*The Stone* 119). Malfoy extends his hand offering friendship and further proposes to help Harry choose his friends (*The Stone* 120). Not caring about Harry’s personality, Malfoy hopes a friendship with Harry will increase his fame at Hogwarts. Harry does not accept Malfoy’s handshake, whereby Malfoy decides to substitute “friendship” for antagonism. In “I’d be careful if I were you, Potter [...]. Unless you’re a bit politer you’ll go the same way as your parents. They didn’t know what was good for them, either” (*The Stone* 120) Malfoy not only threatens Harry, but also insults his dead parents; a *faux pas* that Harry, scarred by the loss of his parents, is unable to forgive. Ron contributes to Harry regarding Malfoy as unreliable and as a turncoat when adding that Malfoy’s well-known wizard’s family earlier sympathized with Voldemort, but after his downfall asserted that they had been bewitched by him (*The Stone* 121).

Being rejected by and jealous of Harry, Malfoy sees it as his right and obligation to treat Harry disrespectfully, but Harry too, although being considered a good character, has malicious tendencies. By tricking Harry into breaking the school rules by flying up to collect another student’s remembrall (*The Stone* 162) and in luring him into a midnight duel without the intention of appearing himself (*The Stone* 172-173), Malfoy does everything in his power to have Harry expelled from Hogwarts. His earnest attempts to get Harry in trouble are predictable due to his evil nature. Harry being spiteful when landing a position on the quidditch team (*The Stone* 165-166) and receiving his broomstick, a Nimbus 2000 (*The Stone* 179), is not as expected. Knowing that both items are desirable to Malfoy (*The Stone* 88) Harry rubs Malfoys nose in it saying that “it’s really thanks to Malfoy here that I’ve got it [the broomstick]” (*The Stone* 180). Harry’s complacency when seeing Malfoy’s horror as he refers to Malfoy being the reason for Harry’s spot on the quidditch team is apparent. This shows that even Harry can be revengeful and spiteful. In a survey made by Moore, 12-year-old Robby

says that “Harry isn’t perfect, but he redeems himself in other ways” (37), explaining why Harry’s sometimes questionable choices are forgiven by the characters (and readers).

The resemblance between Harry and Malfoy in trying to prevent each other’s success is not their only common attribute. Furthermore, they are both respected models for their dormitories and they both rely on two close friends; but still Harry is regarded as good and Malfoy as evil. Harry and Malfoy both earn their positions among their fellow students; Harry due to being brave and chivalrous as a true Gryffindor student, further treated below; and Malfoy because he is cunning in pure Slytherin spirit, as described above. While Harry becomes famous because he helps others, Malfoy does so because of the opposite, i.e. because he is a true Slytherin who “use[s] any means to achieve [his] ends” (*The Stone* 130). In Moore’s survey mentioned above, two children, 11-year-old Katy and 8-year-old Peter, say that “Harry seems like a good friend” (21) and that “I’d be glad Harry was with me to fight against Voldemort [...] and people like that. They would scare me” (61), explaining why characters and readers sympathize with Harry; they see him as a true friend and someone to rely on in difficult situations. Malfoy on the other hand only represents himself as shown below in the way he chooses and treats his friends.

Only someone who can help him become famous is good enough for Malfoy. That the latter’s choice of friends is determined by personal gain is shown in his relationship with Crabbe and Goyle, who accompany Malfoy in the chase of Harry. The heavily set boys, who “have no individual personality” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 23) are portrayed as Malfoy’s “bodyguards” (*The Stone* 120) constantly following his directives. As Harry shows more interest in Crabbe and Goyle than in Malfoy (*The Stone* 120), the latter’s lack of concern about his friends is evident as he reluctantly and “carelessly” (*The Stone* 120) introduces them to Harry, deeming that he should be the one in focus. An additional sign of Malfoy feeling superior to his friends is shown in “he sloped away with Crabbe and Goyle behind him” (*The Stone* 159), which shows that their indisputable place is behind their leader, Malfoy, backing him up. Malfoy represents a young and untrained version of Voldemort as, like Voldemort, he uses his “friends” for his own purposes, though he does not kill the ones helping him and he does not yet have enough knowledge in witchcraft to compare himself with him.

Harry’s two close friends Ron and Hermione are, in comparison to Malfoy’s friends, treated with respect and as equals. Ron, being a boy wizard, who is average in his scholarly attainments having Hermione correct his assignments (*The Stone* 198), and Hermione, a

muggle girl at the top of the class with “a hundred and twelve per cent” (*The Stone* 292) on an examination, indicate that Harry is open-minded; implying that he does not care about gender, race, or brains when it comes to selecting friends. Three examples of how Harry, Ron and Hermione stand up for one another, in a true “all for one, and one for all” (Eccleshare, *A Guide* 23) spirit are: Ron and Harry risking their lives to rescue Hermione from a troll and Hermione in return lying to a teacher to protect them (*The Stone* 189-193); studying together to pass their exams (*The Stone* 266); and cooperating, prepared to sacrifice their lives for one another in fighting Voldemort (*The Stone* 304-18). Whereas the roles of Malfoy, Crabbe and Goyle are definite, Malfoy being the leader and the other two his followers, Harry, Ron and Hermione mutually respect and allow each other to grow both individually and within the group.

The ill-treatment of the Dursleys and the disputes with Malfoy described above contribute to Harry defeating Voldemort; nonetheless without his mother’s love and his friendship with Ron and Hermione, Harry would not have been able to conquer Voldemort a second time. The Dursleys’ evil neglect of Harry, and their not telling him about his parents or his heritage (*The Stone* 62-63), build up an inner anger against maltreatment and injustice. As both Dudley and Malfoy represent the muggle and the wizard worlds’ self-centered bullies who have chosen Harry to be their designated underdog, they also contribute to Harry’s rage. In saying that “Harry had never believed that he would meet a boy he hated more than Dudley, but that was before he met Draco Malfoy” (*The Stone* 157), the narrator also suggests that the degree of Malfoy’s cruelty increases. Attempts to suppress Harry: Mr and Mrs Dursley due to not wanting an abnormal wizard in the family (*The Stone* 63); and Dudley and Malfoy due to their own satisfaction or envy, all miscarries. Instead, Harry is actually strengthened in his determination to be good and to do the right thing, namely defeat the evil embodied in Voldemort. Growing up without loving parents or friends and in an abusive environment, it is not until Harry meets his mother and father (with the help of the Mirror of Erised), and Ron and Hermione that he appreciates their true worth. The mutual respect and concern between Harry, Ron and Hermione, along with the love of Harry’s mother are what decide the outcome in the battle against Lord Voldemort.

As Harry is so sure of who he is and who he wants to become, the reader is convinced that he is indeed as innocent and good as he seems to be. The narrator making Harry a round character “so fully developed that we may even be able to predict [his] actions and reactions” (Lukens 88) is the foundation of the reliability in the goodness of Harry. The believable

picture of a genuinely virtuous character captures the reader, making the reader wanting to be his friend or even wishing to be him, as shown throughout Moore’s book on interviewed young readers.

Despite its enormous popularity, there is still some doubt in some quarters as to whether *The Stone* will become a children’s classic. As established above (p. 2-3), Abanes and Bloom do not believe in the future of the novel as they criticize it for being morally destructive and not worth reading. The largest threat against *The Stone* reaching the status of a children’s classic though, is the role of media. Articles and interviews on the *Potter* series and its author J. K. Rowling, overexposed book sales involving capes and wands, games and related books, and finally movies featuring the novels, have all been “forced” upon and discouraged potential readers from reading the novels. Especially adapting the novels for the screen risk preventing the novels from becoming children’s classics, owing to people rather spending two to three hours per movie than devoting a longer time reading the novels.

One factor that speaks in favor of the first novel becoming a children’s classic, however, is that it has been read by millions of people long before it was ever adapted for the screen. Ecchleshare argues that the many prizes *The Stone* was awarded in 1998, including, the Children’s Book Award, is a sign that “the origins of its success [...] lay in children’s wholehearted and enthusiastic adoption of it as a book to read and enjoy” (*A Guide* 13). Much of the novel’s success can be attributed to its exploration of two worlds, Harry’s journey in finding himself and his fight with evil in its many forms as represented by the Dursleys, Malfoy and Voldemort. Those readers who have used their imagination to re-create the world of Harry Potter and who have not seen the film will pass their impression on to their children. Hopefully, these children will share their parents’ enthusiasm for the novel and pass it on to their children in the future. If this will be the case only time can tell.

Not knowing what the future holds, the status of the novel today must be treated. The impressive auction price for a first edition of *The Stone*, with the author’s handwritten notes and original illustrations in it, landing on £150,000 in May 2013 speaks for itself. Several newspapers around the world, e.g. *Firstpost* and *Washington Post*, reported about the sale proving that the sale was one of its kind, exceeding other children’s classics sales prices in the same auction; Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* was sold for one fifth of the prize (*Firstpost* n.pag.). Also the Swedish publishers of *The Stone*, Rabén & Sjögren, confirm that there is still a genuine

interest for the *Potter* series⁷. To date around 3 million copies of the complete series have been sold in Sweden and Rabén & Sjögren is still producing new copies of the novels to bookstores and libraries around the country (Johansson 2013)⁸. Considering that the population in Sweden is less than 10 million people, the series must be regarded as well liked. Moreover, the total number of more than 450 million sold copies of the novels around the world, as discussed above (p. 4), is a clear sign of their popularity.

That the *Potter* series in July year 2000 was the foundation for special children’s list, so as not to crowd the bestseller lists of popular adult fiction (Smith n.pag.) is an additional sign of the popularity of the novels. Given that literature for children has a brief history, the *Potter* novels have already played an important role in its development. Earlier children must read books written for adults or moral stories from the 19th century; in the western world these were written by H.C Anderson and the Brothers Grimm. Professor Nodelman, argues that “something called ‘children’s literature’ exists only because people are convinced that children are different from adults – different enough to need their own special texts” (15). Further he reasons that even though “children’s literature is distinct from other kinds [...] the differences are less significant than the similarities, [...] the pleasure of children’s literature are essential the pleasure of all literature” (20). These resemblances to some extent also explains why *The Stone* has attracted numerous adult readers. The columnist for *The Globe and Mail*, for example, John Barber, states that as many as one fifth of the *Potter* novels sold in Canada during the first decade after its publication were bought by adult readers (Barber n.pag.), including books with both children’s and adult covers⁹.

The Stone and the following six novels in the heptalogy have made an impressive impact on children’s literature by, according to professor Stein Martin, “inspir[ing] kids to read more” and “attract[ing] adults[‘] positive attention for children’s literature” (*H.P Books Inspire Reading* n. pag.). This essay supports that *The Stone*’s ability to captivate different age-groups is of importance, but moreover it demonstrates that the novel’s innovation of fantasy literature is what contributes to it reaching the status of a children’s classic. In the true spirit of fantasy

⁷ On November 18 2013 a survey, consolidated by yours truly, consisting of four questions was sent to the Swedish book publisher Rabén & Sjögren. The information on the Swedish sales numbers and the continued demand of the novel was received the very same day in an e-mail from Cecilia Nilsson, spokesperson for Rabén & Sjögren.

⁸ Also the British book publishers of the *Potter* series, *Bloomsbury*, was asked to participate in the survey, but in an e-mail received November 21 2013, a spokesperson for the company wrote that “Unfortunately, as part of company policy we are unable to disclose any sales information”.

⁹ Barber refers to the Canadian publisher of the *Potter* series who says that the adults bought the novels regardless the cover, not having any problem reading children’s books.

literature, two worlds are presented in *The Stone*; compared to earlier fantasy novels, however, *The Stone* also represents something new by stressing the importance of the secondary muggle world. By featuring evil in different forms and within both the muggle and the wizard worlds, Harry’s inner journey and determination to be good are convincing. The love of his mother and the support of his friends, along with Harry’s loyalty and kindness, convince the characters as well as readers that Harry has a good nature, and thus deserves to win the final conflict against the evil Lord Voldemort.

J. K. Rowling’s *The Stone* is only the first novel in the *Harry Potter* series; the remaining novels introduce other forms of evil such as “soul-eating” in *The Prisoner of Azkaban* and ill-disposed slander in *The Goblet of Fire*, the first performed by the dementors and the second by Rita Skeeter. For an overall understanding of the eternal conflict between good and evil and its representation in the *Potter* novels, a wider analysis of all seven novels is required. Also, within *The Stone* alone, there are other characters such as professor Snape and professor Quirrell who could be analyzed; due to their complexity, however, and space restrictions, they have not been included in this essay. Whether the novel is to become a future children’s classic within the high fantasy genre, only time will tell. The future of *The Stone* lies in the hands of its present and future readers, but as professor McGonagall predicts for the wizard world, “every child in our world will know his [Harry’s] name” (*The Stone* 20).

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