

Voldemort's Transformation to Affect the Plot in JK. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*

Ekō Hadi Yuniarto & Enny Anggraini

Abstract

JK Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince is a popular novel. It is the sixth edition of the Harry Potter series. The story tells about a wizard named Harry Potter who has a big enemy called Lord Voldemort, a very powerful dark sorcerer. Lord Voldemort as the antagonist has a tight relation to the plot of the story. This essay will discuss the role of Lord Voldemort in the plot of the story. Tom Marvolo Riddle transformed into Lord Voldemort because of what he experienced in the past. This transformation will become a crucial part of the development of the plot of the story. Thus it is proven that a character who is not a major one and not the protagonist can have a crucial role to the plot.

Key words: *Plot, transformation, psychoanalytic criticism*

Introduction

JK. Rowling's *Harry Potter* is a popular work of fiction that is very interesting to discuss. The story talks about the life of a young wizard named Harry Potter in a school for witches called Hogwarts. Harry Potter became an orphan because a sorcerer called Lord Voldemort killed his parents.

Voldemort is the antagonist in the story but he is interesting to discuss since he has a big influence upon the flow of the story. It seems that he is the character that controls the story since he is the one who creates the conflict in the story.

This paper will discuss the role of Voldemort in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. This is the 6th book of the Harry Potter series. In this book, Voldemort's past life story is revealed in detail. Compared to the previous books, the last book contains more information about Voldemort. That is one reason why the last book is chosen when discussing Voldemort.

In short, this article would like to try to find out how a person called Tom Marvolo Riddle was transformed into Lord Voldemort and how this transformation affected the plot of the story.

A Brief Note on Psychoanalytic Criticism

In *An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry defines psychoanalytic criticism as “a form of literary criticism which uses some of the techniques of psychoanalysis in the interpretation of literature” (Barry, 2002: 96).

One famous theory from psychoanalytic criticism is Freud’s theory on the unconscious. According to Freud, the unconscious as that part of the mind beyond consciousness has a strong influence upon people’s actions. He creates a theory called repression, where the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflict, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events are forced out of unconscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious.

Freud also defines two key terms concerned with psychic processes: the first one is Projection: a mechanism where aspects of ourselves (usually negative ones) are not recognized as part of ourselves but attributed to another. The second one is the Defence Mechanism: a psychic procedure for avoiding painful admission or recognitions (in Barry, 2002:97-98)

Freud also stated that all human behavior is motivated by sexuality. “Freud designates the prime psychic force as libido, or sexual energy. His third major premise is that because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulses, many of our desires and memories are repressed (that is actively excluded from conscious awareness)” (in Guerin, 1999: 123-124).

Freud divides the psychic zones into three:

1. The id

This is the reservoir of libido, the primary source of all psychic energy. Its function is to fulfill the primordial life principle or *pleasure principle* without regard for social conventions, legal ethics, or moral restraint. It is the source of all our aggression and desires. The *id* is lawless, asocial, and amoral. Therefore, it can lead us to self destruction.

2. The ego

This is the rational governing agent of the psyche. Its function is to protect the individual. The ego is needed to regulate the instinctual drives of the id so that the energies can be released in nondestructive behavioral patterns. The ego is governed by what is called the *reality principle*. It compromises with the conscious mind.

3. The superego

This is the moral censoring agency and the repository of conscience and pride. It serves to repress or inhibit the drives of the id, to block off and thrust back into the unconscious those impulses toward pleasure that society regards as unacceptable. The superego is dominated by the *morality principle* (in Guerin, 1999: 125-127).

Discussion

1. The Process of Tom Marvolo Riddle's Transformation into Lord Voldemort

Voldemort, the antagonist in JK. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, used to be called Tom Marvolo Riddle. His mother was a witch but his father was a muggle, a person who did not have the power to be a witch. In the witches' world, it was an embarrassing thing if a witch got married to a muggle. Although not all witches thought that it was an embarrassing thing to marry to a muggle, some of the witches would be very proud if they could keep their blood pure. Tom Marvolo Riddle's grandfather was one of such witches who still considered the pure blood of a witch the most important thing. Unfortunately, Voldemort's mother, Merope, could not keep her pure blood as a witch. She fell in love with a handsome muggle called Tom Riddle. Actually, Tom Riddle did not love her, but she gave him a love potion, so that Tom Riddle "unconsciously" fell in love with her. After the marriage, Merope was pregnant. She stopped giving Tom Riddle the love potion, because she thought that after being together for a long time, Tom Riddle had already fallen in love with her without needing the potion. But, she was wrong. Tom Riddle left her after realizing what happened to him. She was very sad at that time, and finally died not long after giving birth to the young Riddle. Before her death, she gave the young Riddle to a muggle woman.

The muggle woman treated young Riddle as her own child. But as he grew up, she felt strange with him, with his "special" ability. Because of that, the young Riddle felt that everybody considered him a strange boy. At the age of eleven, he joined a witch school called Hogwarts. In Hogwarts, he lived with other children who had the same ability as him. There, he grew as a smart student. Many people were surprised by his outstanding ability and skill. Young Riddle grew as a solitary boy. Although many students wanted to be his friend, he did not want to have a friend. He did not want to depend on other people but only to trust himself.

Finally, he knew the story of his past life. He knew about his parents and his grandfather. He also knew that he was one of the descendants of Salazar Slytherin, a dark powerful wizard who was one of the founders of Hogwarts. Salazar Slytherin was a witch who hated muggles and half-blood muggles very much. He thought that muggles and half-blood muggles could destroy the dignity of pure blood witches. Therefore, he considered those witches who belonged to muggle blood as "dirty" and "low" witches. Young Riddle knew about the entire story of his family; therefore, he hated muggles and the half-blood muggles very much. His hatred was increased by his mother's experience with a muggle. Tom Riddle had left his mother alone and made her suffer. As a result of his mother's suffering, young Tom's hatred of muggles grew even greater.

As the descendant of Salazar Slytherin, it was an embarrassing thing to be a half-blood muggle. Therefore, he felt so embarrassed after knowing that he was a half-blood muggle. After the young Riddle knew about his past, he came to his grandfather's house. There he met his uncle, Morfin. When Morfin looked at the young Riddle's face, Morfin realized that he was Merope's son

with Tom Riddle. Because of that Morfin mocked him. The young Riddle was so angry. He then looked for his father and killed him. By modifying Morfin's memory, he put the blame for Tom Riddle's death upon Morfin, so that Morfin had to stay in the witches' prison, Azkaban.

The young Riddle became stronger and stronger as he grew older, even more so after he found a great dark spell called Hocrux. Hocrux was a kind of spell that could make a witch become immortal by dividing his own soul into several parts. His brain, that could master many spells easily, and his Horcruxes, that made it difficult to kill him, had made him stronger.

Because young Riddle was too ashamed to have his father's name, he changed his name into a name that would make people too scared to mention. He changed his name to Lord Voldemort. That was the beginning of the appearance of Voldemort in the story. Lord Voldemort liked to kill people especially muggles or half-blood muggles. Many witches were afraid of him because of his great dark power. Some of them even wanted to be his slaves by calling themselves The Death Eaters.

After Voldemort changed his name from Tom Marvolo Riddle to Lord Voldemort, he started to kill people. He killed muggles and also other witches who did not want to join him. By killing people, he wanted to prove to the world that he had great power, so that many people would be afraid of him. His anger because of his past became his main motivation for killing people. He felt that he was not welcomed by others, even by his own family. His uncle, Morfin, mocked him for being a half-blood muggle. His father, who was a muggle, left him before he was born.

Two of the victims who were killed by Voldemort were Harry's parents. Voldemort killed Harry's parents when Harry was still a baby. He killed them because they did not want to join him as Dark Eaters. When he killed Harry's parents, he actually wanted to kill Harry too, but unpredictably, he failed. Harry was covered by his mother's charm in sacrificing her own life. The curse which was used to attack Harry turned back and attacked Voldemort himself. He was destroyed by his own curse. He became weak and could do nothing; even to live he had to be a parasite within others' bodies. Starting from that time, he hated Harry very much and wanted to kill him. That time also symbolizes the beginning of Lord Voldemort becoming the antagonist in the story, in other words, becoming the rival of the main character in the story, Harry Potter.

2. Psychological View on Lord Voldemort's Psyche

Forgetting or ignoring his unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, and his unhappy past life really affected Voldemort's life. One of the past events that had a big influence on him was his unhappy childhood. The condition of being an orphan forced him to live with a muggle.

His special talent cannot be accepted in the muggle world. Because of that he is considered a special boy. But the word "special" in this case has a negative connotation. In other words, Voldemort was considered a strange boy when he was still a child. Because of that, he felt lonely and friendless. This kind of condition made him brave, independent, but also cruel. He liked to do everything by himself and did not want to depend on others. But, he was so

cruel to his friends. He liked to make his friends suffer through his special ability.

By having no real parents and friends, Voldemort feels ignored and forgotten. He feels that nobody considers he exists in this world. By having special power, he wanted to show his existence in the world. He wants to show that he cannot be underestimated as a half-blood muggle. If this is explored more deeply, when Voldemort wants to show his existence, it is actually one way to get people's attention. Nobody wants to be ignored. Everybody needs to be cared for and loved, and so does Voldemort. Although in the story it is said that Voldemort does not like to have any friends, actually he does want friends. As a human, he cannot live alone. He needs other people to live with. But, unfortunately no one cares for him. Therefore, he makes a kind of barrier in himself. This barrier makes him not depend on other people. The barrier is the result of his great sadness and his disappointment in, and hatred of other people for not caring for him. Based on that, it can be interpreted that the conflict in the story is actually the release of Voldemort's great sadness and his disappointment in and hatred towards the people who did not care for him. Although it is said that when he was still in Hogwarts there were many students who wanted to be his friends, he refused them. His teacher in Hogwarts actually cared for him, but he still felt lonely. That was because either his friends or his teachers did not give him real love and attention. They loved him only because he was smart.

No one can accept him as an ordinary man who has many weaknesses like others. He can only be himself in front of himself and not other people. People need someone who can understand and accept them the way they are. But, unfortunately Voldemort does not have such a person. Merope as his mother is expected to be a figure who can accept him as the way he is. But this is only a dream for Voldemort because his mother has already died.

According to Freud, the unconscious as the part of the mind beyond consciousness has a strong influence upon people's actions. He creates a theory called repression, where the forgetting or ignoring of unresolved conflict, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events are forced out of unconscious awareness and into the realm of the unconscious. In this case, the feelings to be ignored and forgotten have a big influence on young Riddle's mind. Unconsciously, these feelings affect his personality and changed him into an evil witch. It is normal that a person will not like or even be angry with the people that ignore him. That kind of feeling happens to the young Riddle when he felt ignored or forgotten. Because he experienced that kind of feeling for a long time, the effect of it upon his personality was very deep.

Voldemort's unresolved conflict with his mother also has a big influence upon the development of his personality. His hatred of and disappointment with his mother because of her marriage with his muggle father cannot be resolved because his mother has already died. The young Riddle holds on to his anger and disappointment with his mother. One of the influences upon his personality is that he will be easily angry with people who make mistakes, and he will not forgive them easily. This kind of personality is shown when he has become Lord Voldemort. Voldemort will not easily forgive his followers, the Death Eaters, when they make mistakes. Even only a simple mistake can lead them to their death. Voldemort will not give any forgiveness to those who

make him disappointed. One of the examples is Lucius Malfoy, one of the Death Eaters, who failed to do his duty. Lucius Malfoy preferred to stay in Azkaban, a prison for witches with the terrible dementors as guardians rather than come back to Voldemort. Even though the dementors were amongst the most terrifying creatures in the magical world, Lucius wanted to stay in prison because he knew that his failure would lead him to his death.

Freud defines two key terms concerning with psychic processes; one of which is projection. This is a mechanism where aspects of ourselves (usually negative ones) are not recognized as part of ourselves but attributed to another. This kind of process happens in young Riddle's mind. He does not realize that he actually already has the evil side inside him. That evil side is actually inherited from his ancestor, Salazar Slytherin. Although young Riddle already knows about his ancestors, he does not realize that the personality they possess is an evil personality. By practicing dark magic, his ancestors have shaped their evil personality. By practicing dark magic, his ancestors have also broken the magical law. One prominent characteristic expression of the personalities of evil witches is killing people. Salazar Slytherin liked to kill people, especially muggles and half-blood muggles. Young Riddle's grandfather and uncle also did the same thing. This can be shown when the minister of magic tried to catch Morfin, young Riddle's uncle because he was suspected of killing a muggle.

"...Mr.Gaunt', said Ogden doggedly, 'I am afraid that neither your ancestor nor mine have anything to do with the matter in hand. I am here because of Morfin, Morfin and the Muggle he accosted late last night. Our information, 'he glanced down at his scroll of parchment, 'is that Morfin performed a jinx or hex on the said Muggle, causing him to erupt in highly painful hives.'..."

"...And so what if he did, then?' Gaunt said defiantly to Ogden. 'I expect you've wiped the Muggle's filthy face clean for him, and his memory to boot_...' (Rowling, 2005: 197).

The young Riddle knew that his ancestors liked to kill people, especially muggles. He also knew that it broke the magical law. But young Riddle did not realize that it was a wrong thing. He considered it a "noble" work. According to him, killing muggles is one of the ways of restoring the dignity of witches. By killing muggles and half-blood muggles, all witches will be pure blood again. Young Riddle did not consider killing muggles a wrong thing, but on the contrary, he considers it the right thing to do. That is why young Riddle is very proud to continue Salazar Slytherin's "noble" work. This is seen when he opened the chamber of secrets which was built by Salazar Slytherin to be opened by his descendants and then continued his work of killing muggles and half-blood muggles with the help of a big deadly snake whose eyes could cause death.

Freud also defines another key term which he called the defense mechanism. This is a psychic procedure for avoiding painful admission or recognitions (Barry, 2002:97-98). To be an orphan is a painful condition that has to be faced by young Riddle. His pain becomes deeper when he is ignored and forgotten by the people around him. From this case, it can be interpreted

that the evil personality in the young Riddle's mind is also the product of his reaction toward the pain caused by the people surrounding him. It is normal for people to avoid pain. Nobody wants to be hurt. Unfortunately, as human beings, we can not avoid pain. There is always pain in our everyday lives. Pain is part of human life. But as human beings, we often avoid pain. The same thing happens to young Riddle. He was actually so hurt because of his condition. He lived without his real parents, in an unfriendly environment where many people considered him a strange boy. Everyone would feel the same as young Riddle if they were placed in such a condition. To avoid pain, he decides to throw away his hope to be loved and cared for by others. It makes him prefer to live alone. It is better to live alone than to long to live with somebody. His loneliness makes his pain greater. Nobody wants to ease his pain. Unconsciously that kind of condition supports the development of his evil side.

3. The Role of Lord Voldemort in the Plot of the Story

Voldemort seems to take control of the flow of the story. It seems that each event that happens in the story is caused by Voldemort.

Roberts and Jacobs in their book *An Introduction to Reading and Writing* state that "a plot is a plan or ground work for a story, based in conflicting human motivations, with the actions resulting from believable and realistic human response" (Roberts and Jacobs, 1987: 87). From that definition it can be seen that the plot of a story is the base for a story to develop. The base itself is based on the conflicts happening in human life. Therefore, the plot of a story has a tight relation to the conflict in a story.

Voldemort, as the antagonist in the story, creates the main conflict in the story. Therefore, Voldemort has a tight connection with the plot of the story. Each important event that happens in the story, such as the death of the headmaster of the school of magic, Hogwarts, is caused by Voldemort. Snape, one of Voldemort's followers, killed Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, because Malfoy could not properly carry out the duty given to him.

Richard Gill in *Mastering English literature* shows the relation between a plot and a character. He states that what a character tries to achieve is the cause of the plot of a story (Gill, 1995: 174). In this case, Voldemort's ambition to be the greatest witch among all others becomes the cause of the plot of the story. Because of his ambition to be the greatest witch, Voldemort had caused many problems both in the muggle and in the witch world. In order to be the greatest witch, Voldemort had to have the greatest power. According to him the greatest power amongst all others was the power that could stop death. Therefore, he used Horcruxes to get immortal life. It has previously been explained that in order to get one Horcrux, Voldemort has to sacrifice the soul of a person. The use of Horcruxes later supported the development of the evil side of his personality.

Besides Voldemort's ambition to be immortal, another thing that causes many problems or conflicts in the story is the guiding principle of his ancestor. Voldemort was the last descendant of Salazar Slytherin who hated muggles very much. He had a principle that the muggle's blood was "dirty" blood that

could lessen the dignity of pure blood witches. Therefore, he wanted to kill muggles and all of the witches who were half-blood muggles. This kind of principle affects Voldemort's behavior. As Carl Rogers said about a type of positive regard called conditional positive regard, "infants develop conditions of worth; they believe they are worthy only under certain circumstances. Having internalized their parents' norms and standards within their positive regard, they view themselves as worthy or unworthy, good or bad, according to the terms defined by their parents." Therefore, infants inhibit their own development by living within the confines of their conditions of worth (Schultz, 2004: 316).

Although Voldemort never respected his parents, he did respect his ancestor, Salazar Slytherin. This shows when he used an old ring belonging to Salazar Slytherin as one of his Horcruxes. It is said in the story that Voldemort liked to use precious things as the places where he could keep his parts of the soul, that is as Horcruxes. One of them was the old ring, which was possessed by his ancestor Salazar Slytherin.

"...Yes indeed, 'said Dumbledore, and he raised his blackened, burned-looking hand. 'The ring, Harry. Marvolo's ring. And a terrible curse there was upon it too..."

"...Lord Voldemort liked to collect trophies, and he preferred objects with a powerful magical history. His pride, his belief in his own superiority, his determination to carve for himself a startling place in magical history; these things suggest to me that Voldemort would have chosen his Horcruxes with some care, favouring objects worthy of the honour'..." (Rowling, 2005: 470-471).

Voldemort values the ring as a precious thing. The ring symbolized that he was one of Salazar Slytherin's descendents. Based on that, it can be interpreted that Voldemort respected Salazar Slytherin very much, as one of the great dark wizards.

Barnet, Berman, and Burto also tries to show the relation between plot and character by stating that the things happening in most good fiction are the result of certain personalities or character traits of the people (Barnet, Berman, and Bruto, 1988: 711-712). In this case, all of the things happening in the story are the result of Voldemort's evil personality. By considering the plot structure in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, and which events in each structure are caused by Voldemort and his followers, the relation of Voldemort, as the antagonist, to the plot of the story can be seen. Even, the event in the crisis of the story is caused by Voldemort's closest follower, Severus Snape.

Voldemort's evil personality, which has a tight connection to the plot of the story, can be motivated by his sexual energy. Freud states that all human behavior is motivated by sexuality. According to him the most important psychic force is libido or sexual energy. He also said that many of our desires and memories are repressed because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulses (Guerin, 1999: 123-124). Based on that, Freud divided the mental process into three psychic zones; they are id, ego, and superego.

The id is the reservoir of libido, the primary source of all psychic energy. Its function is to fulfill the primordial life principle or *pleasure principle* without regard for social conventions, legal ethics, or moral restraint (Guerin, 1999: 125-127).

If it is analyzed deeper, Voldemort's behavior can be seen to be affected by his sexual energy. It has been said in the story that what Voldemort wants most is to be the greatest witch of all. In other words, it can be interpreted that the thing Voldemort wants so much is the power to conquer all. As a human being, it is normal to dream to have power over all things in order to conquer all of the things in this world. But, everything has to have limitations. Everything has to follow the rules, both human rules and the rules of nature. It is different with Voldemort. In his effort to get what he wants, he does not care about anything, including human rules and the rules of nature. He does not care whether or not his effort to get the greatest power makes other people suffer. All he thinks about is only himself. Based on the above discussion, it can be interpreted that the *id* in Voldemort's mind has dominated his mind. Voldemort only thinks about the pleasure he will get if he can get the greatest power.

Freud also adds that the id is lawless, asocial, and amoral. Therefore, it can lead us to self destruction (Guerin, 1999: 125-127). Voldemort's habit of killing muggles or half-blood muggles shows that he ignored both the muggles' law and witches' law. He does not care about how much disruption he has caused to satisfy his "enjoyment" in killing muggles and half-blood muggles. If we consider the resolution or the denouement of the story, where Harry Potter, as the protagonist, wanted to destroy all of Voldemort's Horcruxes in order to kill him, it can be seen as the beginning of the destruction of Voldemort, as the antagonist. It proves the statement that the id can lead us to self destruction.

Another psychic zone according to Freud is the ego. It is the rational governing agent of the psyche. Its function is to protect the individual. The ego is needed to regulate the instinctual drives of the id so that the energies can be released in a nondestructive behavioral pattern (Guerin, 1999: 125-127).

By analyzing Voldemort's behavior in that he likes to kill people just to fulfill his pleasure and his desire, the domination of the id in Voldemort's mind can be seen. Although actually he has an ego that functions to control the instinctual drives of the id, unfortunately the ego is not strong enough to control the domination of the id in his personality. Voldemort's way of life is the proof that id has a big domination in his personality.

The last psychic zone according to Freud is the superego. It is the moral censoring agency and the repository of conscience and pride. It serves to repress or inhibit the drives of the id, to block off and thrust back into the unconscious those impulses toward pleasure that society regards as unacceptable. The superego is dominated by a *morality principle* (Guerin, 1999: 125-127).

As what happens with the ego, the domination of the superego in Voldemort's mind is less than the domination of the id. The superego carries the moral principles that make a person become aware of the norms of society. It has been said before that Voldemort never cared about the norms and the rules in the witches' world. By killing muggles and half-blood muggles

he had broken both the muggles' rules and the witches' rules. He did not care about that, because the most important thing according to him was that he could satisfy his desire and at the same time could finish Salazar Slytherin's "noble" work.

Voldemort's ambition to be immortal, the influence of his ancestor, Salazar Slytherin, and his sexuality, all affect his behavior. All of those things encourage the evil side in his personality to develop, and lead him to become an evil wizard. His evil personality has created many problems or conflicts in the story, so that the story is not without a strong plot.

Conclusion

From the analysis it can be concluded that the appearance of Voldemort in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* has a big influence on the story. The appearance of Voldemort creates the main conflict in the story. Thus, his role is crucial to the existence of the conflicts and the development of the plot.

There are three main ideas that make the story grow. They are Voldemort's ambition to be the greatest witch, the principle of Voldemort's ancestor, and Voldemort's evil personality. Those three main ideas create the conflict in the story, and give it a clear and strong plot.

Voldemort's ambition to be immortal caused many problems or conflicts in the story. By making Horcruxes, he killed many people, especially muggles and half-blood muggles. Two of the victims are Harry's parents. The death of Harry's parents may symbolize the beginning of the appearance of Voldemort as the antagonist in the story.

Another main idea that supports the plot is the evil principle of Voldemort's ancestor. As the last descendant of Salazar Slytherin, Voldemort hates muggles and half-blood muggles very much. According to him, muggles and half-blood muggles can destroy the dignity of the pure-blood witches. That kind of principle encourages his evil personality to develop.

The last main idea that creates the conflict in the story is Voldemort's evil personality. Voldemort's past life has a big influence on his personality development. His unhappy childhood and the disapproval of the people around him turned him into a lonely evil witch who will not trust anybody but himself.

References

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002.
- Berman, Morton, Sylvan Barnet, and William Burto. *Literature for Composition*. London: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1988.
- Gill, Richard. *Mastering English Literature*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995.
- Guerin, Wilfred. *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*. London: Harper and Row Publisher, 1999.
- Roberts, Edgar. Jacobs, Henry. *An Introduction to Reading and Writing*. Englewood-cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1987.
- Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury, 2005.
- Schultz, Duane, and Sydney Schultz. *Theories on Personality*. London: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 2004.