

A watercolor illustration of a forest scene. In the upper left, a phoenix with vibrant orange and red wings is shown in flight. The trees are depicted with dark blue and teal trunks and branches against a lighter blue background. In the lower right, a woman with dark hair is shown in profile, holding a young boy with glasses and a green shirt. The boy is looking up towards the phoenix. The overall style is soft and artistic, using a palette of blues, greens, and oranges.

SEEING THROUGH
HARRY POTTER'S EYES
Bridging Imagination
and Reality

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From an older-generation Harry Potter fan
to the younger and future generation fans of
a transformative work of art

Contents

Introduction: Of Three Brothers and the Deathly Hallows	5
Chapter 1: Symmetries in and between the Books	9
- The Separate Books	9
- The Seven Books as a Whole	15
Chapter 2: Harry, Dumbledore, Snape, and Voldemort	19
- The Growth of a Disciple: Harry, Dumbledore and the Order of the Phoenix	19
- Harry and Severus Snape	21
- Harry, Dumbledore, and Voldemort	23
- Harry and Hermione	24
- A Tale of Two Orders	25
Chapter 3: What Would Harry See? A Journey through Modern Culture	27
- The Enablers	27
- The Voice of a Modern Magus	31
- The Voice of a Repentant	33
- The Voice of an Insider	36
- Where Magic Meets Abuse	38
- The New Death Eaters on Stage	40
- The Ultimate Desecration of Innocence	42
- Splitting the Self	45
Chapter 4: What Would Harry Do? The New Wizards of the Light	49
- The Magic of Self	50
- Understanding the Self: Three Giants of the Mind	55
- The Magic of Us	61
- The Magic of Gaia	68
- The New Phoenix	75
Conclusions: The Path of Modern Magicians	79
Appendix: The Growth of a Remarkable Teenager	83

Introduction

Of Three Brothers and the Deathly Hallows

Writing a decent sequel to a good novel is hard ... Writing six of them is almost unheard of. Each of the 'Harry Potters' deserves to stand on the shelf with its mates, and the last one more than fulfills the promise of the first six.

Malcolm Jones, *Newsweek*

Now, for the first time ever, a story had escaped his control. It had taken on a life of its own, and all the imagination in the world would be insufficient to halt it. He felt numb.

Michael Ende, *Momo*

'But,' said Lewis, 'myths are lies, even though lies breathed through silver.'
'No,' said Tolkien, 'they are not. ... just as speech is invention about objects and ideas, so myth is invention about truth.'

Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*

If he did not speak his tale, it grew dank and musty, it shrank inside him, while with the telling the tale stayed fresh and virtuous.

Taleswapper, *Seventh Son*, Orson Scott Card

The tale of the Deathly Hallows is told only at the end of the Harry Potter story although its implications were already present throughout the book. It is a tale that all Wizard children have heard growing up:

Three Wizard brothers arrived one day at a river that they were unable to wade. Using their magic skills they built a bridge and proceeded to cross the waters. Midway across they met Death, who was angry at being cheated out of his prey. Disguising her feelings, she flattered them, offering a gift for each.

The oldest brother wished for a wand that would overpower all other wizards, and Death fashioned for him the Elder Wand. The second brother yearned for a way to bring the dead back to life, and Death gave him the Resurrection Stone. The third and wisest brother asked for something that would protect him from Death herself, a cloak that would allow him to leave undetected. Reluctantly Death had to concede her own Cloak of Invisibility.

Eager to put their gifts to the test, the three brothers departed. The first not only used his Elder Wand but boasted about his power, attracting a thief who killed him in his sleep to recover the wand. The second managed to conjure back from the dead his loved one, but discovered that she could not permanently cross the threshold and be in his life anew. He resolved to kill himself to join her. Only the third escaped an early death. He lived a long life, passing on his Cloak of Invisibility to his son, and welcoming Death with a contented heart.

The knowledge of how to befriend death and steer away from the temptations it poses traverses the lives of Lord Voldemort, Albus Dumbledore, and Harry Potter. The first ignores it completely; he cannot see death as any other than an end and something to avoid at all cost. He craves physical immortality. Dumbledore overcomes its temptation after a painful experience, but is still reminded of it close to his actual death. Harry capitalizes on the experience of his master and beloved friend to hold in his hands the three Deathly Hallows, without indulging on any one of them. He disposes of the stone and the wand and keeps the Cloak of Invisibility that belonged to his parents and that Dumbledore offered to him anonymously on the first Christmas night at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Harry Potter's story is a calling for our times when so much darkness envelops us, when catastrophe and death at the individual and collective levels are commonplace, when evil leaves us numb and dispirited, so much so that we can hardly summon a response from within. So why can so many readers hardly put down the thousands of pages that lead to the little story above? Why do so many readers intuitively feel the truth of the Potter odyssey, so much so that not only is Harry Potter one of the most sold stories of the present and of all times, it is also one of those that people both young and older don't tire to reread or view anew in a movie theater.

I was a latecomer to the Potter odyssey, not bothered to delve in such a long enterprise of seven volumes, and not just a little turned off by the culture that hovers around the Harry legend. What with the wizarding nights, the blockbuster movies, the eagerly overadvertised awaiting of the books year by year. Enough to turn me off, at least until a Dutch gentleman contacted me on a LinkedIn account I never used. I had even forgotten I had posted some minimal information on it. The gentleman in question was Frans Lutters, who like me had little interest in Harry Potter until illness and his eager high school students hurled it on him with a message of importance.

I gratefully read his book and felt compelled to see the movies. I understood why this would be a topic of relevance to many people, especially younger generations. I felt I could fully relate to the phenomena and to the waves it generated. There is substance, there is everything that makes a story full of meaning, of layer of meanings indeed. There is a little bit of everything for everybody, for those who want to awaken the imagination at least.

I started to joyfully relate to people around me who told me about their Potter interest. I suddenly had a common language with people who were not my usual travel companions and looked forward to more such experiences. I started to see many familiar, deeper realities under a new lens, and I borrowed the language of the Harry Potter books.

Spring passed and summer came, and I looked for good literature to distract my mind from all the nonfiction reading I naturally take on. I thought about alternatives and settled on Harry Potter, Why not? It was a fallback solution. If I liked one I would have another six in store. So there I was, naturally hooked until practically the end of the year. I read them, savored them, relished them.

I started noticing interesting things. People from all walks of life react with enthusiasm when I buy one of the books, or when I mention it; often people with whom I would hardly have another conversation of substance. Some of these tell me that Harry Potter was the first book they ever read; that they acquired taste for reading from this first exposure; that they read and reread the first book, or the following ones in wait for the next one to be published. I noticed something else: people who approached me about Harry Potter come from all sorts of social backgrounds, including those who have had little more than a minimal education and were not used to reading literature ... or even reading at all.

A chance of a few minutes' conversation with Giorgio Tarditi Spagnoli landed me on a short explanation of the links between the books. It made sense. I couldn't stop myself. Everything started ordering itself around these basic threads. So this book is dedicated to him in deep gratitude. What follows bears his stamp and the weight of a hefty contribution.

Before compiling this book, a question nagged me constantly. Why a book about teenage wizards for a young adult audience? Aren't these premature topics for people that age? As I lived with that question and explored the topic, a realization dawned. Not something completely new, mind you. Well, our culture has become more and more destructive. Voldemort is really on the rise and, want it or not, his footprint on the younger generation is undeniable.

This book started on a light note and went deeper and deeper, leaving me a little surprised and cautious. Voldemort's grip on our culture is so pervasive that many of us listen to his slogans, sing his songs, support his goals without realizing it. It is common to fall under his spell, and youth is the most exposed and at risk. Now I better understand J.K. Rowling's choice and the success of the books.

A Book Synopsis

In the next chapter I will review the bare bones of the symmetries between the books, which launched me into the exploration of this essay. The books follow a very interesting progression, and the earlier ones are reflected in the later ones.

Chapter 2 is closely linked to the first in further discernment of the threads of the story. Harry Potter grows in relation to contrasting sets of relationships. He learns

from friends as much as from foes; in fact it isn't even always easy to recognize one from the other.

I have entitled Chapter 3 "What Would Harry See?" as a way to bring the books in conversation with modern reality. For this purpose I show that much of what seems farfetched in the pages of a fiction book can meet with what seems farfetched in reality, but still not too difficult to follow and document. This is, if you will, a journey through the deepest darkness of modern culture. Topics approached may cause some surprise when the cover of imagination is thrust aside to reveal present trends. The overall theme is completed and contrasted in the final chapter "What Would Harry Do?", which is both an exploration of the islands of light of modern culture and of the possibilities offered to those who want to let Harry Potter inspire their lives for the best.

The Appendix offers a retelling of the crucial events of the seven books. It is not a summary; rather it tries to highlight key events, links and connections that may easily be missed and that render the present essay more understandable. It may serve the reader who has forgotten some of the plots of the Harry Potter books.

Chapter 1: Symmetries in and between the Books

The truth. ... It is a beautiful and terrible thing, and should therefore be treated
with great caution.

Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

The only way to cope with something deadly serious is to try to treat it a little
lightly.

Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*

In great literature, I become a thousand different men but still remain myself.

C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*

The more I savor the images of the Harry Potter odyssey, the more do I perceive an inherent growth and delicate symmetries and contrasts. In this I received my first impulse by a friend. Through his observations I realized that the whole is really larger than the sum of the parts, much in the same way that I did with J. R. R. Tolkien's trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*.¹ This is proof of an inspired work, of something that is a revelation not just for all of us readers, but possibly for the author in the act of creation. Let us try to find some of the elements of the delicate and vibrant architecture of each part and the whole.

The Separate Books

The first book, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, touches on immortality. It is about the realm of Earth, the body, and physical survival: Lord Voldemort is struggling to recover a body. The book starts with the mention of how Harry survived Voldemort's attempt to murder him, to destroy his body. Voldemort's curse rebounded against the Dark magician, and Dumbledore provided Harry a home that could guarantee his survival after his parents' death.

What happens at the beginning is mirrored at the end. An unconscious Harry learns that Dumbledore was there just in time to snatch him from the claws of Voldemort. First a loving mother, then the person who most clearly loves Harry from beginning to the end of the stories. We could say Harry is saved first by love then by wisdom.

Harry faces two temptations: the Mirror of Erised and the Sorcerer's Stone. First comes the mirror, which displays the spectator's deepest desire, in Harry's case his

¹ Luigi Morelli, *Tolkien, Mythology, Imagination and Spiritual Insight: The Enduring Power of The Lord of the Rings*

parents. Dumbledore dissuades Harry from returning to the mirror, and Harry has the maturity to abide by the counsel. The first look into the mirror expresses the allure of the past. Later Harry sees himself in the mirror as he is, in the confrontation with Voldemort. In his hand is the Sorcerer's Stone, which gives immortality and is sought by Voldemort.

The mirror is introduced in the same chapter in which Harry receives the Invisibility Cloak. The cloak renders a person invisible, while the Mirror of Erised makes visible what is invisible.

Potter and Draco Malfoy are present in the turning points of the Sorcerer's Stone. Draco leads Harry to discover the three-headed dog. And Harry and Draco discover the hooded figure sucking unicorn blood in the forest: Voldemort in the body of Professor Quirinus Quirrell.

In the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, we enter the realm of life and death—the course of life—and the realm of water. We are introduced to two biographies: a biography with many falsehoods, that of Tom Riddle, and a vastly false biography, that of Professor Gilderoy Lockhart. The two are quite charming deceivers, though of a different ilk.

The book starts and ends with Dobby. The house-elf causes problems in trying awkwardly to "save" Harry, or rather prevent him from going to Hogwarts. It is Dobby, once more, who closes the train platform to Harry and Ron Weasley, and who bewitches the Bludger (a heavy iron ball in the magical game Quidditch) that hits Harry. Harry rescues Dobby from his Dark master, Lucius Malfoy, at the end.

Lockhart appears at the beginning and then plays a role in the end, always through deceit. He first tricks Potter and his two friends Hermione Granger and Ron, not to mention all of the students; he is then tricked into helping the three.

The climax happens in the realm of water: the basilisk comes from the underground water. It removes the life forces; it petrifies, renders the person akin to the frozen, mineral physical body, not dead but close to it. Over and against the mythical basilisk stands the no less mythical phoenix, Fawkes. The first petrifies; the second one dies and is resurrected. Harry cannot possibly vanquish the basilisk without the help of the phoenix. He has to risk death to be saved by Fawkes.

The soul and knowledge of good and evil seem to stand at the center of the third book, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Animals all throughout the book play an important role in different forms. The book introduces us to Harry's godfather Sirius Black and his alternate form of a black dog from the very first chapters. Here is a man who is accused of a crime he hasn't committed, who has had to pay a very heavy price for it: incarceration in the prison Azkaban under the shadow of the dementors (Dark wraiths that feed on human happiness). The victim, Sirius, is portrayed as the villain and Peter Pettigrew, the perpetrator, as the victim. The book ends with the flight of Sirius on the back of the hippogriff Buckbeak, but only after another inversion of sorts. Whereas in a first instance the hippogriff is

executed and Sirius condemned to return to Azkaban, Harry and Hermione manage to reverse the course of time, to offer Sirius and Buckbeak a second chance.

Animals constellate the book in various forms. We are introduced to the first Animagi, wizards who can transform into animals: Padfoot (Sirius),² Prongs (Harry's father James Potter), Moony (Remus Lupin), Wormtail (Pettigrew). These were friends who turned into animals to support Lupin, who had been attacked by a werewolf and suffered a fate as such. Add to this colorful collection Hermione's favored and clever cat, Crookshanks, and Professor Rubeus Hagrid's hippogriff. The book starts with the dementors causing Harry to faint; it ends with Harry creating the Patronus (animal guardian) of his father; the stag (Prongs) that repels the dementors.

Another associate theme is time travel. Professor Sybill Trelawney foresees Harry's death mistakenly, first as a Grim (an omen of death as a black dog) in Harry's tea cup, then as a Grim in Harry's crystal ball. Finally, she makes a true prediction about the return of Voldemort, but this time it's not a conscious one. Hermione has learned to travel in time to take more than one class at a time with the Time-Turner device. Traveling back in time with Harry, she manages to alter destiny and save Sirius and the hippogriff Buckbeak, who help each other and flee together.

Throughout the events we see some uncharacteristic behaviors: Harry is prey to great emotions; he overdoes it, inflating his aunt Marge Dursley and putting himself at great risk. He even contemplates living as an outcast wizard and is only saved by an uncharacteristic decision of the Ministry of Magic. The calm and collected Hermione slaps Draco. Lupin turns into a werewolf and howls in the Shrieking Shack. Quidditch becomes a truly dirty game. Even in his memories, Harry is confounded by the extremes of the youthful behaviors of his father and friends.

For the three friends Harry, Ron, and Hermione, most of all Harry, it is a time of awakening to a subtler understanding of what is good, what is evil, and what makes us all just human, between every possible set of extremes.

It may be hard to characterize the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, at first. It is about the three and the fourth. The three that tradition has enshrined in the Triwizard Tournament, and the fourth that spoils that tradition. The three come from different wizarding traditions, with the accent on different aspects of the whole, and they have to face three tests. From the first to the last test, the role Harry plays increases.

The three tests require facing progressively harder challenges. We could call them the "test of fire" (dragon); "test of water" (merpeople), and "test of air" (maze). In facing the dragon, Harry uses the broomstick and his natural flying abilities to claim the dragon's golden egg. This is about using what life has taught you most. Basically, each competitor resorts to his or her own strength. They work independently

² Note that Sirius is the brightest star in the constellation Orion; it is also called the Dog Star. No pure coincidence that Sirius Black appears as a black dog in his Animagus form, and that his brother is Regulus, the brightest star of the Leo constellation.

from each other. Harry, however, has already done something unique; he has given advice to Cedric Diggory for all the competitors to stand on even ground.

Among the merpeople, Harry manages to transform his body to fit the water element. Here he only knows the general nature of the test. He succeeds in meeting the challenge, but he does more. He cares about Fleur Delacour's fate and that of her sister. He goes out of the way to keep the three together.

In the maze we face the test of the open air. Harry can only rely on his presence of mind and on his good heart. He displays a strong sense of fair play and has to face Dark magic. He neutralizes his competitor Viktor Krum, who is under the spell of Barty Crouch Jr; he rescues first Fleur and then Cedric; and he shares his prize with Cedric. Many traditions and schools of philosophy, e.g., those of the Romantics, speak of the forces we develop in the soul: those of thinking, feeling, and willing or head, heart, and hands. Harry is like the one who holds these forces together. He is like the ego that harmonizes thinking (Cedric), feeling (Fleur), and willing (Krum). The three are reconciled in the fourth. Isn't the Goblet of Fire itself a fitting image for the self, that force that holds everything together in the soul?

The book ends with the death of Cedric and the attempted murder of Harry, always at the hand of Voldemort. Harry miraculously survives, and carries the body of Cedric back to the school through the help of the Triwizard Cup, which has been revealed to be a magical transportation device, a Portkey. The story ends with Dumbledore speaking about Cedric.

The story of the fourth book begins with the retelling of the deaths of the Riddle parents fifty years previous—just after opening of the Chamber of Secrets—then of Frank Bryce, who hears mention of the planned death of Harry Potter.

Harry's mother died to protect Harry, causing Voldemort's curse to rebound. This ripped Voldemort from his body, and forced him to flee to a faraway forest where he inhabited the bodies of snakes to stay alive. Three years earlier a future Hogwarts teacher (Quirrell) wandered across his path. Voldemort inhabited his body in order to come to Hogwarts, pursue the Sorcerer's Stone, where he was thwarted by Harry Potter. Now Harry has miraculously survived again.

In the fifth book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, a further step is taken. Dementors attack Harry and his cousin Dudley Dursley in the Muggle (nonmagical) world, sent by no less than Dolores Umbridge, who is seized by an utter self-righteousness, used for purposes she cannot possibly fathom.

The fifth book is the longest book, though not necessarily the most eventful, just more subtle. At its center stands the contrast between lower and higher selves, represented by the Order of the Phoenix: the ego that dies and is reborn in the magnificent image of Fawkes, Dumbledore's faithful companion. Love appears as the power that can prevail against Voldemort. The self, Dumbledore/Potter, against the shadow Voldemort is the backdrop of the book.

Dumbledore's initial speech at Hogwarts is interrupted by the petulant Umbridge to signify that this will not be a regular school year: new rules are being written. Dumbledore, persecuted, will go underground, and so will Harry in taking in hand the teaching of the Defense against the Dark Arts. At the end Umbridge herself finds herself in grave danger in the pursuit of Dumbledore's "secret weapon," in which she is only too willing to believe. She finds herself threatened by a horde of centaurs, only to be saved by ... Dumbledore.

The book takes on the theme of secrecy. It is the secrecy of Voldemort—hiding the truth—against the secrecy of the Order of the Phoenix—protecting its members. Secrecy is the fruit of fear and denial that has been the reaction of too many at the knowledge of Voldemort's rebirth. Minister for Magic Cornelius Fudge, paranoid about Dumbledore's "secret plots," and Umbridge believe that change can be stopped through more and more rules and ruthless discipline. The book thus sets the stage of fear and denial against courage and love.

The Order of the Phoenix takes refuge in the house of the Black family, of which Sirius is a scion. What has served generations of Dark wizards is now put to use for the good. At the end of the story Sirius dies in the halls of the Ministry of Magic, the place that no longer represents the high ideals of magic, and which should have remained safe for the Order.

Harry is practically inducted in the Order of the Phoenix to fight against Voldemort with the help of the Order's members. Dumbledore's Army becomes a parallel underground Order of the Phoenix at Hogwarts. Dumbledore continues to protect Harry by taking the blame for Dumbledore's Army, even when he leaves Hogwarts to Umbridge's care, knowing that the students will stand up for their dignity.

The Ministry of Magic is moving under the sway of Voldemort and Harry has to be protected by the Order and Dumbledore to resist being expelled from Hogwarts on trumped-up charges. Arthur Weasley, representative of the integrity that remains at the Ministry, survives a vicious attack.

Book 6, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, places at center stage Harry and Professor Severus Snape—the Half-Blood Prince—the major villain after Voldemort. But is he really a villain? Harry meets him as an apparently implacable opponent in the classroom, and as a source of inspiration in brewing potions. At times the figure from the pages of a school-book meets with the real person.

The confrontation with Snape/Half-Blood Prince is closely accompanied by Draco's odyssey. The book starts with Snape pronouncing the Unbreakable Vow, obliged anew to court with evil, and ends with Snape killing Dumbledore, two events that mislead us about Snape's ultimate intentions. Nothing is quite as it appears under the influence of Snape, who sways literally somewhere between Dumbledore and Voldemort but serves a higher purpose. Harry remains faithful to Dumbledore but has to wrest from Snape/Half-Blood Prince as much as can be useful, and figure out when to stop. This subtle distinction brings him difficult experiences and pain.

Harry and Draco form another theme that bookends the narrative. Harry follows Draco to the Borgin and Burkes shop, detecting his evil intent at the beginning of the story, surmising that Draco has become a Death Eater. He sees Draco undecided about whether to kill Dumbledore at the end of the book. What impressions can this leave in his soul? The story is also bookended by the Invisibility Cloak, which allows Harry to first see Draco at Borgin and Burkes, then see him attempting to kill Dumbledore.

The book also places Snape, the reformed Death Eater, in relation to Draco, the inducted Death Eater who can still be saved. Dumbledore has completely accepted Snape's repentance and does everything to save Draco. Snape, obligated by his Unbreakable Vow, saves Draco when he hesitates to kill Dumbledore. Snape kills him to honor his agreement with the wizard, while rescuing Draco from the obligation.

Harry and Dumbledore have become equals: Dumbledore leads, but Harry has to contribute in finding out about who Voldemort truly is. Dumbledore passes the baton to Harry by teaching him how to find and destroy Horcruxes (objects containing a portion of a wizard's soul). Harry will have to continue on his own. His initiation through life continues; he has lost his parents and godfather Sirius, now Dumbledore, the one whose love most protected him.

We come now to the epic conclusion of Book 7, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Dumbledore has died but left instructions to both Snape and Harry. Both of them, though Harry most of all, play a very important role; both are tested and placed at great risk. Nothing could happen if it were not for Harry's open quest and Snape's secret role.

This is also the book of the confrontation with the greatest wizard of humankind, Voldemort. As in the previous book, Harry opposes him, but also continuously learns from him. He can only overcome him because he has understood him through and through and is aware of all that Voldemort, despite his power, doesn't know. The deeply loved orphan stands against the orphan who was not loved, and who could not love. Harry is willing to sacrifice his life and body. He is the final Horcrux.

The book starts with danger to Harry's life. He is placed against the wall by Voldemort and survives, when his own conscious self could not have saved him. It ends likewise with a direct confrontation with Voldemort in which Harry has to go through a seeming death and resurrection.

Over the years Harry has mixed up school and real-life assignments that his destiny entrusts him. Now he leaves school altogether with his two faithful companions, Hermione and Ron. He has left his studies called by a quest, not unlike that of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*, a quest to destroy. The three have to experience homelessness and moving forward without fully knowing what comes next. Harry who has left Hogwarts to destroy the Horcruxes faces the climax of the battle with his fellow Hogwarts teachers and students.

Dumbledore has left three gifts to the three friends. Hermione receives the book *The Tales of Beetle the Bard*, leading her to the discovery of the three Deathly Hallows. To Ron comes the Deluminator, which allows him to return to his companions. To Harry comes the Golden Snitch that encloses the Resurrection Stone and the indication of the future uses of the sword of Gryffindor. The gifts will help the three friends find the three Deathly Hallows: the Resurrection Stone, the Elder Wand, and the Cloak of Invisibility. Together they have to face death at the personal and collective levels.

Hallows and Horcruxes are themes that meet and intersect. Harry wants to pursue the Hallows before rightly returning to the Horcruxes, avoiding Dumbledore's temptation. Even so he obtains the Hallows in the end. Harry disposes of the Resurrection Stone and returns the Elder Wand to Dumbledore's tomb. He uses the cloak to the end, but he sets it aside to confront Voldemort openly.

The Seven Books as a Whole

The books' inner architecture is not the only remarkable feature of Harry Potter's modern legend. The whole itself bathes in a deeper symmetry and balance. It may be more easily seen by starting from the center: Book 3 to Book 5.

What unites the three books is the figure of Sirius. In Book 3 he is the man on the run, who needs to be vindicated. He introduces us to the foundations of the Order of the Phoenix, though indirectly. We see those who were to begin just friends and fellow students, James Potter and Lily Evans, Lupin, Sirius and even Snape, who are at the time of the story members of the Order of the Phoenix.

In Book 4 Sirius has become Harry's godfather. Harry has to complete a central ordeal of his initiation, which leads him outside the confines of the safety of the school to confront Voldemort completely on his own.

In Book 5 the Order becomes explicit: it is out in the open, even though it protects itself in secrecy. The opposition is no longer just the one between Dumbledore and Harry versus Voldemort. It is on one hand the Order of the Phoenix and on the other what could be called the Order of Voldemort, for now just his Death Eaters.

Sirius, whose life was at risk in Book 3 where he was rescued by Harry and Hermione, sacrifices himself and in so doing, furthers Harry's mission.

Books 2 and 6 form another delicate symmetry. In book 2 the biographies of Tom Riddle and Gilderoy Lockhart form a backdrop to the whole. Both these biographies deceive, they mislead Harry and Ginny. Both Riddle and Lockhart have the power to charm, one through his carefully cultivated persona and myth; the other through cunning calculation and constant deception. Lockhart in particular has the deeply grounded Hermione under his spell. She takes time to discover what for Ron and Harry is obvious.

In the sixth book a thread corresponds to the first two: the Half-Blood Prince's book of potions. In the journal we can retrace the Prince's odyssey that has led him to improve on the efficiency of potions. Through the Prince's research Harry is able

to save Ron's life. But through the Prince's Sectusempra he places Draco's life in mortal danger, only to be relieved by the real-life and present Prince, Severus Snape. It's as if Harry has an accelerated Snape journey, one that could avoid him much later chagrin. Here the tables are turned. Hermione sees the danger of the potions book before Harry does. The figures of Tom Riddle and Voldemort deceive us into trusting them. In looking at Snape, Harry and the reader are completely deceived about his real intentions.

Though we only find this out later (seventh book) the real life of Severus Snape, is a reversal of Lockhart. Snape is the one who constantly appears as the villain. His pride led him to become a Death Eater and now a repented one. His love for Lily has formed a turning point; it awakened him to the full reality of the path he was pursuing in support of Voldemort. It brought forth that power is not worth pursuing at any cost. In Snape the external shell of the villain reveals the beauty of a life turned around.

Lockhart is the teacher of Defense Against the Dark Arts, who cannot help his students muster real courage, much less do the work. Snape has always wanted to be that teacher, and this is what he becomes in book six. He would know how to defend himself against the Dark Arts, as only one knows who has been an insider.

Finally, though furthest one from the other, Books one and seven form a visible symmetry. Harry is first introduced to the reader as the one who has survived a curse by the most terrible magician in the world through the power of love of Lily, his mother. The magician carries horrible consequences of this deed in his own body. He is now seeking to secure the Sorcerer's Stone.

In book seven the Sorcerer's Stone reappears, though here it is also, or exclusively, called the Resurrection Stone. In book one Voldemort wants to acquire a new body. He is thwarted in the effort by Harry, who can use the Sorcerer's Stone with selfless intent. Voldemort will only succeed in book three, though he fails once more in killing Harry. In book seven Harry and Voldemort are once more brought together for the final battle in which one of the two will have to die.

Closely accompanying the odyssey of the stone are Harry's parents. Is it a coincidence that they appear in books one and seven? And always in times coinciding with Voldemort's attacks? In the first instance the Potters appear in the mirror of Erised. They are introduced to Harry and bring solace to the orphan child. A transformation occurs between the two extremes, in book four, the middle point of Harry's journey. Here Harry meets Voldemort at Godric Hollow. Just when everything seems lost Harry's and Voldemort's wands conjure up the dead and, most important among them, Lily and James Potter. It is they who enable Harry to rescue time from the Death Eaters and ensure his departure through the portkey. Finally, in the last book, James and Lily are summoned by the Resurrection Stone, but now they only need to offer reassurance. Harry has reached the maturity to understand that the dead accompany him. He just needs to remind himself if he doubts.

Voldemort has accomplished the most despicable acts of dark magic in the effort to ensure himself immortality. He made his way to it with one crime after another, and inflicting random cruelty every time his ego was even slightly bruised.

Harry has an advantage over Voldemort. He has pondered at length about the Deathly Hallows, which Voldemort cannot understand. Harry is like Ignotus Peverell, the one who contents himself with the Invisibility Cloak; he lets go of the search for the other Hallows and concentrates on the Horcruxes. When the time comes Harry can debilitate Voldemort's soul more and more, and therefore his body. The love his mother bore for him, of which we hear in book 1, has now matured in the love that leads Harry to sacrifice himself for his fellow students and teachers. Harry's love protects all those around him.

Chapter 2: Harry, Dumbledore, Snape, and Voldemort

End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it.

Gandalf, *The Lord of the Rings*

You thought, as a boy, that a mage is one who can do anything. So I thought, once. So did we all. And the truth is that as a man's real power grows and his knowledge widens, ever the way he can follow grows narrower: until at last he chooses nothing, but does only and wholly what he *must do*. . . .

The Master Summoner, *A Wizard of Earthsea*

Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?

Albus Dumbledore

There is something remarkable in Harry's spiritual growth in relation to the three other main characters. Harry owes something of his painful growth to each one of them, though clearly not in the same way with each. This is not to discount what he owes to others, especially Hermione.

The Growth of a Disciple: Harry, Dumbledore, and the Order of the Phoenix

Harry is under Dumbledore's direct care since the day he survives Voldemort's killing curse. It is to the headmaster that Harry owes his own survival in the house of the Dursleys. It seems that Harry is tested in every possible way, starting from a hostile home environment in which he is unwanted.

In the first book Dumbledore is clearly present to guide and steer Harry. He is first able to resist the temptation of the Mirror of Erised thanks to the wizard's warning. Harry can then relate to the mirror in a new way, when he comes close to the Sorcerer's Stone. In the confrontation with Quirrell/Voldemort he exhausts all his inner and physical resources before Dumbledore comes to his rescue. At the end Dumbledore can already assess that Harry has unique inner powers of integrity and that he is also protected by his mother's love.

Harry finds himself torn by his double nature, by what he owes to himself and what comes from Voldemort's curse. This is a recurring theme of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. In Dumbledore's office Harry at one and the same time receives intimations of his kinship with Slytherin through the Sorting Hat and with the Order of the Phoenix through Fawkes, whom he meets for the first time. At the height of the confrontation within the Chamber of Secrets, Harry defies Riddle/Voldemort reminding him that he is not the equal of Dumbledore, the one

whom he considers the greatest magician. Dumbledore's help comes in the form of the phoenix, which renders his formidable task more humanly possible.

In the third book, in addition to Dumbledore, Harry is protected by Sirius, another member of the Order of the Phoenix. Dumbledore is present when Sirius is threatened with a cruel fate. The wizard gives Hermione and Harry free rein with a daring plan to travel back in time, through which Sirius is rescued. Dumbledore congratulates Harry in his choice of sparing Pettigrew's life. Harry is somehow implicitly inducted into the Order of the Phoenix, or rather the order looks upon him for its own future.

In Book 4 we reach a turning point in Harry's maturity. When he looks into Dumbledore's Pensieve, he is made aware of the dimension of the cultural wars of his time. He sees the trials of the Death Eaters at a time when Voldemort was vying for power, the years that preceded the failed curse on Harry Potter. Harry withstands the three tests of the Triwizard Cup on his own. He also stands his ground with Lord Voldemort without Dumbledore's help. The headmaster only intervenes at the end in saving Harry from Barty Crouch Jr, who has been impersonating Moody. Dumbledore plays the role of a true teacher when he explains to Harry why Voldemort's wand summoned the departed souls and Harry was saved. Fawkes once more brings healing to Harry.

In Book 5 Harry has now become the object of a larger enmity. Inside the Ministry of Magic, Voldemort is extending his influence, directly through those he can convert, indirectly through the power of those who, because of fear, deny the evidence of his very presence. Dumbledore appears at the key moment in which Harry is threatened with detention at Azkaban for nothing other than protecting his own life. Thus is Harry rescued, and he can begin a parallel, junior Order of the Phoenix, aptly dubbed Dumbledore's Army. The headmaster helps Harry through Snape's Occlumency lessons and takes the blame for Dumbledore's Army upon himself, rescuing Harry for the second time.

At the Ministry of Magic Harry is once more in the presence of Dumbledore when Voldemort has taken possession of him. However, it's Harry's courage and wisdom that free him from the clutches of the Dark Lord. Dumbledore continues in his role of teacher in helping Harry understand his relationship to Voldemort and what the prophecy means. Harry has become the concern of the whole Order of the Phoenix.

Book 6 brings Harry to a deeper relationship with Snape, which starts in an unconscious way through his relationship with the Half-Blood Prince in the pages of a book. He only knows at the end that Snape is the prince. Harry is left to ponder at the appeal that the prince has exerted on him through every page of the book.

Dumbledore takes a new step. Harry alone in Hogwarts is to receive direct instruction from its headmaster. In fact this turns into a joint project into an understanding of Voldemort's individuality. Dumbledore may be the one taking the lead, but he knows that the actual confrontation will be Harry's task.

Another dimension of the relationship between the two emerges. Harry sees for the first time Marvolo's ring when the headmaster wears it, and he can't help notice the blackened hand. Now Harry goes through the difficult test of standing by Dumbledore while guessing his more human shortcomings. At present the headmaster openly looks up at Harry in awe of his being and task. When Harry announces his pride in bearing the epithet of "Dumbledore's man," the wizard is visibly moved.

It is Harry who contributes the critical piece of Horace Slughorn's memories concerning Tom Riddle's questions about the Horcruxes. This leads to Dumbledore's insights about Voldemort's work to preserve immortality at all costs through the Horcruxes. Dumbledore and Harry are now full co-workers. Together they go in search of the Horcrux, the locket hidden in the seacoast cave. Soon after Harry has to witness the death of the headmaster, who actually doesn't want Harry's protection. He wants Snape to carry out the task that will allow him to continue to serve Hogwarts and save Draco at the same time.

Dumbledore is still assisting Harry through the help of Ron and Hermione, whose friendship, he has told Harry, is essential for his task. He also assists them through the presents he bequeaths each one of them. Harry can complete his task because of Hermione's ingenuity in reading the clues along the way and putting to use *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. Ron can remain part of the group thanks to Dumbledore's Deluminator. And Harry is guided to the use of the Resurrection Stone and the sword of Gryffindor.

Harry and Severus Snape

Snape looms large as the perfect villain through most of the books, except the very last. To the reader, as well as to Harry, the revelation of his true being comes as a complete 180-degree turn.

Through Snape we see the threads of human destiny. It is Snape who introduces Lily to the world of magic. The two develop a tender complicity and friendship. Lily would be rightfully his were it not for the Dark temptations that lurk in his soul. Snape's contempt for Mudbloods and his interest in the Dark Arts finally sever him from Lily.

Snape's repentance can only come through a bitter discovery of the consequences of his pride. His dependence upon Lord Voldemort has led him to betray the one he loved. Knowing that he has contributed to Lily's and Harry's deaths is shattering. The surviving love for Lily steers him through the ruins he has made of his life. Dumbledore knows the depths of his bitter disillusion and trusts him completely. Only a life of atonement can get him back from the brink he placed himself on. Service to Harry is the price he is willing to pay.

Snape goes back through his own dark night of the soul, suffering to revisit the full impact of his choice and its consequences. Having managed to come out of it and save his soul, he now has to plunge back into it again, in betraying Voldemort, whereas he was earlier on a traitor for Voldemort.

Snape, it seems, has to revisit all his dark past in a willingness to sacrifice. He makes the Unbreakable Vow, which Bellatrix, rightly suspecting him, imposes on him to save Draco. He is thus exposed to the Dark Lord's wishes, among them even the prospect of carrying on Draco's task of killing Dumbledore, should Draco not carry it through.

To Snape falls the perilous task of deceiving Voldemort, and of holding Hogwarts against the Carrows brothers—both Death Eaters—while nevertheless being perceived as a villain. The climax of Snape's odyssey lies in his killing of Dumbledore and the bittersweet discovery that Harry is in fact the last Horcrux.

Snape's journey through the Dark side is documented in the love for knowledge of the Half-Blood Prince. Among his recipes are just as much the bezoar as an antidote to save lives, and the *Sectumsempra*, a killing curse. Snape's love for healing was already present at the time. And his desire to teach the Defense of the Dark Arts becomes all the more understandable, having been an insider. What a synchronicity that Harry has to learn to both appreciate Snape and come to his same boundaries without crossing them.

Harry doesn't realize until the end how much his growth necessarily has had to go through a "Snape phase." Hermione can see the danger of the book of the Half-Blood Prince. Her solution would be to simply stay away from it. Harry has to know it, to penetrate it in order to overcome it. He has to experience it from within and transform it.

Harry gets heady with the recognition the prince's diary helps him gain in Potions Class. He can cut through all of the complexity of the antidotes with the simple recourse to the bezoar, and Hermione is rightly incensed. However, that also means he can save Ron's life.

Harry goes even further than simply stealing recipes. He fails to show empathy for Draco sobbing and crying in the bathroom and inflicts on him a *Sectumsempra* curse, the one that the Half-Blood Prince has marked "for enemies." No doubt he awakens with shock to the consequences of his actions. What a relief to be spared from these by the Half-Blood Prince, no less.

Harry has visibly reached the limits of what he can learn from the Prince, though he also tries a *Levicorpus* jinx, but on the wrong person, Snape himself. After this Harry shows that he has fully learned the limits of what the Half-Blood Prince can teach him. When the opportunity arises again—the book doesn't say it, but we can see it—Harry has overcome the prince's influence through newly acquired empathy. Harry is now willing to rescue Draco from the raging fire, without second thoughts.

What Harry has learned from Snape has been essential for facing Voldemort. Harry has to know his own dark side and curb his desire for a knowledge that seeks power. He needs to have the strength to focus on the Horcruxes, rather than the Deathly Hallows in the trials to come.

Harry, Dumbledore, and Voldemort

The Potters, Dumbledores, and Riddles share a remarkable biographical link, which is not elucidated until the very end. They have all crossed paths at Godric's Hollow. It is there that Harry is first tied to Tom Riddle's grave and then fights his nemesis, Voldemort, and there again that he survives Voldemort's emissary, the snake Nagini. At Godric's Hollow the Potters met their death and Dumbledore first befriended, then fought against Grindelwald.

The Grindelwald episode unites Dumbledore with Snape. There is a reason Dumbledore can readily accept Snape's conversion and trust him. The high wizard has a first-hand knowledge of similar temptations, though his own played out on a minor scale in relation to Severus.

Dumbledore's keen and expansive mind can be tempted by grandiose ideas, when the right stimulus urges it. Dumbledore's pain over the loss of his father and Ariana's incapacity generated by Muggle children leads him to accept the idea of wizard dominion over the world of the Muggles. This initial thrust later becomes a hungering after the Deathly Hallows and the powers they offer over death.

In facing the painful events that coincided in time with Ariana's incident and death, Dumbledore confesses to Harry that he was drawn to the power of the Deathly Hallows, which is why he fell for a time under the spell of Grindelwald, a slightly milder version of Voldemort. When he took a distance from his fellow wizard's plans Dumbledore still suffered under the guilt of the part he played in Ariana's death. Moved by the desire to reconnect and make amends, he used the power of the Resurrection Stone, which he should simply have left alone. He succumbed to his use, having ignored that as part of Marvolo's ring, it was also one of Voldemort's Horcruxes. In a sense Harry too faced this temptation and knows it well; first in the Mirror of Erised in the longing for his parents' presence, then in relation to Sirius. After the death of his godfather, Harry sought help from the ghost Nearly Headless Nick in communicating with Sirius; the latter could not help him because Sirius was not an earthbound soul.

It seems only natural, in fact a strict necessity, that in fighting for the good, Harry has to avoid all of the pitfalls, not only of Snape and later of Voldemort, but also those of Dumbledore. It takes a tremendous patience on the part of Hermione to counsel Harry and lead him back to his true task. Harry has become enamored of the Deathly Hallows, and would gladly trade them for the Horcruxes.

Just as the sixth book shows what Harry has learned from Snape, so does the last show us what Harry can learn, integrate, and transform from Voldemort. Here Harry goes even further than with the Half-Blood Prince's curses. At Gringotts when the fate of the Hufflepuff cup Horcrux is at stake, he tries the Imperius Curse, first on the goblin who is attending to Bellatrix, then on a Death Eater. Not surprisingly he takes on the next step when the situation does not even seem to warrant it. When Harry sees Amycus spit on McGonagall's face, he sends him a Cruciatius Curse. Will he stop before the *Avada Kedavra*?

Once more Harry has courted very close with the adversary's tools and powers. Harry wisely hides his wand when confronting Voldemort in the Forbidden Forest, no doubt for fear of what he might do to defend himself. Harry has to understand the completely materialistic perspective of Voldemort, the outcome of an utterly unspiritual perspective of life that can ultimately only lead to the conquest of physical immortality and complete world power concentrated in one person. Harry has to know what that means. His own search for the Horcruxes reveals to him that such a goal can be reached only through a Faustian bargain, selling the soul at heavier and heavier prices: killing for revenge, for possession, for spite, for a momentary disappointment, and for whim.

Harry has to know all of this to turn the Sorcerer's Stone into the Resurrection Stone. What Voldemort has shown him, and taught him, is the extreme delusion of physical immortality, the utter inhumanity of hungering to be the master of the world, the final hubris of the one who asks humanity to "kneel before me ... and you will join me in the new world we shall build together." Join a world built of nothing else than lies.

Harry has to try the complete opposite. In relinquishing the possibility to fight against Voldemort, he can first pierce the veil that Voldemort cannot enter. He can see beyond death that love is real, that the love of the departed souls of Sirius, Lupin, and his parents is always with him. This knowledge overcomes the last traces of despair. Harry acquires knowledge of the spirit in such a way that he can face utter powerlessness. The dementors, those creatures who feed on human weakness and despair, can no longer reach him.

Harry soon sees himself on the other side of existence. He understands the price that Voldemort has to pay for his utter spiritual dereliction, the ultimate abomination against the human spirit. Before meeting Dumbledore, he sees Voldemort's form as "the naked child, curled on the ground, its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking, ... shuddering under a seat, where he had been left, unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath" as an image of utter, complete powerlessness. He considers helping but is repelled to the point of being unable. Dumbledore knows and simply replies "You cannot help."

No matter how great on his own, none of Harry's achievements would be possible without his two friends, most of all Hermione. It is she who most often comes up with the needed answer or spell in the nick of time.

Harry and Hermione

Hermione is the epitome of clear thinking and level-headedness. She can offer the lead into the solution of a riddle or deep mystery. She has a deep understanding of the world of magic and also simple logic and insight into human nature, whether it concerns Wizards or Muggles.

At times Hermione takes center stage. In Book 3 she is the one who can use the Time-Turner that rescues Sirius and Buckbeak. Harry has to face the most dangerous situations, but he wouldn't even be able to start without Hermione's initiative. When Dumbledore's Army is kept captive of Umbridge in Book 5, she has the guts

and presence of mind to lure Umbridge to her undoing. And in the Malfoy Manor in Book 7, she deflects danger from Harry to herself. She is only second to Harry for her courage.

Hermione is completely devoted to Harry even when this costs her Ron's loyalty. For this she is willing to take more than her share. As much as she admires Harry, she can stand up to him; she is no hero worshipper. She can caution Harry not to jump to hasty conclusions or impetuous plans. She perceives the danger Harry runs in seeking to rescue Sirius, in using the book of the Half-Blood Prince, or with his fixation on the Deathly Hallows.

Lastly she is always prepared. In the last book Hermione has thought ahead of everything they may need while on the run and placed in a tiny, magical beaded handbag. She is the one who can foresee coming dangers and take appropriate measures, reassure Harry when his confidence flags, hang in through thick and thin. She would even volunteer when Harry knows he has to face the situation alone.

The dynamic between the two is truly complementary. Harry has to figure out everything by trying. He's hardly detained by rules if he thinks something must be done. Conscience first; rules may wait. It cost a great deal for Hermione to break a rule, but she can bring herself to it. Whereas Harry has the most often right intuition in the moment, Hermione can see through with clarity. This is also because they have different roles. Harry cannot achieve his goal if he cannot experience from within, even the worlds of the Half-Blood Prince and Voldemort, two experiences that Hermione cannot fully penetrate.

A Tale of Two Orders

Two orders are facing each other, the Order of the Phoenix and the Order of the Dark Lord. On one hand we can see this expressed in the relationship between Dumbledore and his pupils, chiefly Harry Potter, and on the other between Voldemort and one of his faithful, Wormtail/Pettigrew.

Dumbledore listens to Harry and offers him open advice that Harry can take or leave. Harry is advised not to return to the Mirror of Erised, not barred from doing so. He is rarely even reprimanded. Dumbledore withholds from Harry what he cannot yet understand in a gesture of protection. This reciprocity is also a very dynamic one. There's mutual respect between the two figures. Dumbledore wants Harry to grow as an equal. In understanding how to fight Voldemort, Dumbledore gives more and more initiative to Harry. He takes him on the search for the Horcruxes.

Never does Dumbledore punish his disciple. Rather, Harry punishes himself when he does not turn to Dumbledore who is eager to listen to him. We can say that freedom, respect for individuality, and mutuality are themes that move through the whole saga. We even witness a reversal at the very end of the adventures, At King's Cross Station, or what is of it on the other side, Dumbledore admits his shortcomings and applauds Harry for having gone further than he has in withstanding the temptations of the Deathly Hallows. Dumbledore is in effect proving that he was

all along supporting one that he knew could do what the headmaster himself couldn't.

It's all too easy to compare this side of things with Voldemort's world. Voldemort lives in eternal struggle to prevail, in protracted insecurity, prey to all kinds of continuous and strong emotions. Nothing and nobody can fully satisfy him. He needs continuous subservience and people who most of all fear him. To that end he can inflict the pain of a Cruciatus Curse or other punishments. To Wormtail, his cowardly subject, he exacts the price of a hand for his rebirth. When the latter gets a new steel hand, the gift comes at a heavy price; a moment of hesitation will lead Wormtail to his doom. But others fare hardly differently. When one of his Death Eaters lets him down, he can cower him with a Cruciatus Curse. When Lucius falls from grace, he is obliged to pass on his wand to his master. Lucius's task—killing Dumbledore—will fall on his adolescent son.

Freedom and mutuality, change and growth on one hand; subservience, lack of choice, terror, and revenge on the other. The contrasts that the Harry Potter books stage in the pages of fantasy novels seem to be far removed from our reality. And yet are they really? Otherwise what would account for the phenomenal success of the Harry Potter odyssey? What do young generations see in this book that they can identify with? What could give them so much hope?

Chapter 3: What Would Harry See? A Journey through Modern Culture

Harry, he's taking over the Ministry and the newspapers and half the Wizarding world! Don't let him inside your head too!

Hermione Grainger

Oft evil will shall evil mar.

Théoden, King of Rohan, *The Lord of the Rings*

'If people knew the nature of death,' he said after a moment's silence, 'they'd cease to be afraid of it. And if they ceased to be afraid of it, no one could rob them of their time any more.'

The Professor, *Momo*

I don't know the future. I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin.

Neo, *The Matrix*

Fear of a name increases fear of the thing itself.

Albus Dumbledore

Reading one Harry Potter book after another, I often awoke with a jarring feeling, something that blurred the confines between fiction and reality. This is where this chapter originated from. Here I want to offer some of the pointers from the books and then move from these to the world of Muggles, if you will.

The Enablers

Voldemort does not rise again by his cunning alone. He is enabled by outright complicity, but also by human passions and shortcomings, and in the greatest measure by fear and denial.

Book 1

Voldemort has tools that most of people do not suspect, often do not want to know about. He has taken possession of Quirrell, through whom he can achieve his goals in a place as important as Hogwarts. For now this is how far his power can go, while he is waiting to acquire a new body.

Book 2

Book 2 introduces the wavering and corrupt Cornelius Fudge, who wants to reassure public opinion, even at the cost of the truth. He wants to put Hagrid away at

Azkaban, not because he has proof of wrongdoing, but because this reassures the public that the Ministry is acting and knows what it is doing. On the other hand another attack is conducted from within Hogwarts. Lucius Malfoy has managed to threaten or blackmail the twelve school governors to turn against Dumbledore and ask him to resign.

Book 3

Once more we see the inconsistent behavior of the Minister of Magic, Cornelius Fudge. On one hand he condones Harry's extreme behavior toward his aunt Marge, and shows great solicitude toward him. On the other hand the Minister lightly takes on the task of rewarding Snape for his supposed courage with Sirius Black without much of a thorough check, reversing his course immediately after.

We are also introduced to the power of the press. Though it doesn't appear until the end, Sirius has been framed by a smear campaign to take the fall for Pettigrew. Voldemort has the power to reach the press and plant stories that serve his purposes and distort reality. Masses of people are conditioned to believe what he wants.

Book 4

At Hogwarts Voldemort has now found another teacher of the Defense against the Dark Arts to work for him: Barty Crouch Jr, taking the outer appearance of Mad-Eye Moody. And the world of the Muggles is starting to be affected through those Death Eaters who broke out of Azkaban. At the Quidditch World Cup a group of masked Death Eaters have fun at Muggles' expense, whom they levitate above them. And above them Crouch/Moody set Voldemort's Dark Mark.

The smear campaigns of the press reaches directly into Hogwarts. The unscrupulous Rita Skeeter first tarnishes Hermione's reputation for "toying with the famous hearts of both Harry Potter and Viktor Krum." She then attacks Harry, accusing him of being a disturbed and dangerous attention-seeker. In the pub at Hogsmeade she discusses an article whose goal is to destroy Ministry employee Ludo Bagman's reputation.

At the Ministry, fear is rising. Harry has just risked his life in the confrontation against the Dark Lord at Godric's Hollow, and Snape explains that his own Dark Mark on his arm alerted him about Voldemort's return. This is no sufficient evidence for Cornelius Fudge, who has simply become impervious to reality. Fear has given way to denial. When Dumbledore asks the Minister to remove Azkaban from dementor control—since these are Voldemort's natural allies—and entreats him to secure the support of the giants, Fudge refuses to listen.

Book 5

It is no coincidence that the Order of the Phoenix has taken a more active role and so have Voldemort's Death Eaters. The dementors have attacked Harry and Dudley in broad daylight in a Muggle neighborhood, and the Order has found it necessary to place a watch on Harry. All the more so since Harry is presented to the public as an attention-seeking liar.

That the above is a premeditated attack is made clear by the haste the Ministry displays in curtailing Harry's activities and bringing him to a speedy trial. Cornelius Fudge is leading the Wizengamot tribunal with Dolores Umbridge at his side. The trial is rigged against Harry, but the court has not anticipated Dumbledore's convincing presentation of the evidence. Harry is acquitted.

At the Ministry denial has moved a step further into delusion. Now Cornelius Fudge believes that Dumbledore is plotting against the Ministry by raising an army and vying to be the next Minister. Though the Minister is not controlled by Voldemort, in fact he plays into his hands. His right hand, Umbridge has been sent to Hogwarts with clear directives about education mandates coming from the Ministry. The new professor of Defense Against the Dark Arts starts changing the curriculum. When she becomes High Inquisitor, she can actively interfere with all the other professors and produce edict after edict regulating student life. When she needs student help to enforce her policies, she naturally enlists Slytherin students.

Book 6

With things becoming more and more urgent, Cornelius Fudge and his successor Rufus Scrimgeour are now in communication with the Muggle Prime Minister. They discuss disasters and atrocities that have afflicted the community, which bear Voldemort's signature and puzzle the Muggle world. Fudge can finally bring himself to accept that Voldemort is at large and causing havoc. The Ministry, scrambling to reassure public opinion, is doing some window-dressing. Scrimgeour wants to enlist Potter to appear alongside them to offer an image of unity, but Harry refuses to lend himself to the pretense.

Danger lurks within Hogwarts in yet other ways. Even a student has now become a Death Eater: Draco Malfoy.

Book 7

Voldemort now exerts power within the Ministry, for example installing Corban Yaxley as head of Magical Law Enforcement and having Yaxley place Pius Thicknesse under an Imperius Curse as a puppet Minister after Scrimgeour's murder. And the Ministry itself has been corrupted to the core with a new ideology of the pursuit of the Mudbloods, all those who perform magic without having pure Wizard blood. Not only are they persecuted, but so are all Wizards who lend them help or sympathy. The ideology of Salazar Slytherin has spread across the country, and Dolores Umbridge is one of its most fervent disciples and enforcers. Harry has become "Undesirable Number One." Snatchers are given free reign to capture Muggle-born wizards and blood traitors—those who protect Mudbloods. Dissenters will face threats to their loved ones. Xenophilius Lovegood, who has written articles in favor of Harry Potter, has seen his daughter Luna kidnapped.

The press continues its maligning of Albus Dumbledore, this time in grand style, through Rita Skeeter's *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, purporting to reveal the wizard's dark secrets. The book drags Harry Potter in the mud in one fell swoop. Events and documents, which have validity per se, are presented out of context to tarnish people's reputations. Even Harry himself is affected in doubting his master.

At Hogwarts the Death Eaters Amycus and Alecko Carrow terrorize the students and teach the forbidden curses. Voldemort's murders happen with alarming banality. And all who speak of Voldemort with courage—saying his name—can be tracked through global surveillance magic. Lord Voldemort cannot stop at half measures. His success means the subjugation of everybody else's will. His is the use of deliberate Dark magic for world dominion.

There is at present a cultural invasion of nihilistic, destructive influences that permeate a great section of our culture, to which youths are exposed. In this cultural desert, the striking success of the Harry Potter books and movies form indeed a welcome oasis. Much of what the new generations have been imbibing of pop culture in the last fifty to sixty years has been a downward spiraling path, which has greatly accelerated of late. We will follow here only a few threads, some of the most significant tips of the iceberg that show the nature of the underlying mass. We will look at some of the philosophy that strikes a chord in today's mainstream and corporate culture, through some of its well-known representatives, then at trends that have emerged that threaten the youth, and finally, how all of this is a pervasive and coherent message pointing in similar directions. We are fully entering the realm of Voldemort.

When Harry is first tested by the Sorting Hat, he is startled by the verdict: "There's a talent, oh my goodness, yes, and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting. ... so where should I put you?" To Harry imploring "Not Slytherin" the hat replies "Not Slytherin? ... Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that." The thirst to prove oneself and looking for greatness say a lot about the impulse of Slytherin. Both things are not negative per se.

In the view of Albus Dumbledore, Slytherin has as much of a right to be part of Hogwarts as the other three houses. This is because, although we may present here two aspects of reality at seemingly complete odds with each other—in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4—in reality, within the single human being, the borders are much more porous than we are normally willing to admit. Snape was a Slytherin, and he aptly represents what is best of Slytherin, the ability to know the depths and strive for the heights. We know that Bill Wilson, who touched rock bottom with alcohol, was in the best position to help his fellow alcoholics rise up from the depths through Alcoholics Anonymous. Hundreds of thousands can be grateful he had to face this fate.

We will now look at examples of the modern culture of the death-eaters. Among these are also those who, like Snape, have experienced remorse and wanted to offer their admirers a more genuine cultural experience.

The following magus is an example of the dangers of letting the subconscious dominate our conscious personality and letting ourselves be ruled by every whim and pull of the personality. In Aleister Crowley we find someone who desired to shine, an example of greatness and ambition that did not manifest because the individual took the easy way out and did not bring to manifestation his latent

potential. Referring to the “wickedest man in the world”—Crowley’s boastful self-assessment—his sympathetic biographer, Gary Lachman, concludes that the man who had exemplified the idea that “the key of joy is disobedience” was the same who “swallowed enough experience to fill a dozen lives yet he emerges from it all exactly as he began. He remains a colossal example of arrested development.”³

The Voice of a Modern Magus

Aleister Crowley, the magician who proclaimed himself in jest “Great Beast 666” or even referred himself to as a black magician and “a bloody great one,”⁴ has become an idol of art and music, or of a certain kind of art and music. His premises are that nothing has survived from the past; there is no truth that can be ascertained for sure; and therefore, by implication, everything is permitted. His kind of occult path revels in the senses and predicates completely living out all uninhibited passions. Crowley’s cultural ambition was defined thusly: “Magick is the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with the Will.”

It must be said of a man like Crowley that he is indeed no ordinary individual. Crowley had quite a keen mind with a scientific bent and an ability to approach and synthesize complex topics, such as the kabbala. This is the mind that made of him a great chess player who could play more than one game at a time. He was also a writer, a poet, and a painter. Though his production was quite uneven, he touched the souls of many. Such was his physical stamina that he was recognized as a great climber and, notwithstanding the consumption of huge amounts of drugs, he could still maintain quite a level of lucidity to the end of his life. Naturally he had psychic/spiritual faculties: ability for astral traveling, reading or influencing the minds of his fellow human beings, visualizing, yoga. This also meant a great charisma, mixed with equal doses of megalomania and narcissism.

Crowley surrounded himself with individuals who wanted to exalt themselves by entrusting themselves to his charisma but could only do so for a time. For the rest Crowley’s biography reads like a litany of disillusion, angry breakouts, and estrangements, and proximity to individuals with mental illness and suicides.

Tossed about like a leaf in the wind, Crowley indicates in his voluminous diaries that he often had a hard time finding or keeping a direction in life. This also manifested at times in a split personality, a tendency to dissociate and find himself at odds with his environment. Crowley had been brought up in the Christian fanatic environment of the Plymouth Brethren, a fundamentalist sect. He rebelled in a life-long hatred of Christianity and the figure of Christ, and announced an early resolve to sin. Nevertheless, with characteristic incongruity he also underwent a ritual crucifixion and in the oath he pronounced called himself a “member of the body of Christ.”⁵

Crowley’s turnaround came in 1904 with the help of his wife Rose’s psychic abilities, which led to the revelations of the being who called himself Aiwass, a

³ Gary Lachman, *Aleister Crowley: Magick, Rock and Roll, and the Wickedest Man in the World*, 297.

⁴ *Ibid*, 252.

⁵ *Ibid*, 138.

message that bestowed on Crowley complete license and freedom to do as he pleased. Not surprisingly, however, that was also what he had set out to do anyway, before then. Crowley built his "magick" around these revelations. But, because they were highly contradictory, he held questions and at times moved away from them.⁶ They nevertheless provided the legitimacy for his life's message. At times he protested the morality of these but still went along in search of a life beyond the confines of good and evil.⁷

To the revelations of Aiwass he soon added the practice of sex magic, replete with sadomasochism, and had the luck of receiving the right support at the right time, introducing his new sexual rituals and his so-called Gnostic Mass within the legitimate setting of the Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.). In his Abbey of Thelema in Sicily, over time he elected his penis to the rank of supreme deity in the attempt of conceiving a "magical child" that would solve *The Book of Law's* kabbalistic mysteries in following the directions of Aiwass. Although he did not support Hitler, he recognized common occult "thelemic" inspirations in the writings and message of the German leader. On the other hand he tried to enlist Stalin, who no doubt figured out these things on his own.⁸

Crowley purported the idea of destroying Christianity to install the New Age of Horus predicated by the being Aiwass. This New Age is to be lived under the disposition of the Law of Thelema: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." The freed will is the key element of magic. Another tenet proclaims "Love is the Law, love under will." For Crowley the devil is a symbolism for one's own ego. He worships the absolute freedom of the ego in what some have called "self-divinizing." His "Hymn to Lucifer" lays some of the bases for it:

Ware, nor of good nor ill, what aim hath act?
Without its climax, death, what savour hath
Life? an impeccable machine, exact
He paces an inane and pointless path
To glut brute appetites, his sole content
How tedious were he fit to comprehend
Himself! More, this our noble element
Of fire in nature, love in spirit, unkenne'd
Life hath no spring, no axle, and no end.

His body a bloody-ruby radiant
With noble passion, sun-souled Lucifer
Swept through the dawn colossal, swift aslant
On Eden's imbecile perimeter.

⁶ Aiwass promised Crowley that even hard drugs would not harm him: "To worship me take wine and strange drugs whereof I will tell my prophet, and be drunk thereof! They shall not harm ye at all" (Gary Lachman, *Aleister Crowley*, 117). Crowley long remained convinced that he was able to control his drug consumption, though long before his death he realized the fallacy.

⁷ Crowley briefly pronounced himself a reluctant follower of Aiwass's *Book of Law* and "bitterly opposed to the principles of the Book on almost every point of morality." (Gary Lachman, *Aleister Crowley*, 118)

⁸ Gary Lachman, *Aleister Crowley*, 288.

He blessed nonentity with every curse
And spiced with sorrow the dull soul of sense,
Breathed life into the sterile universe,
With Love and Knowledge drove out innocence
The Key of Joy is disobedience.

All his life Crowley aimlessly sought the thrill of extreme experiences that would make him feel alive, different, and unique because he could not rest and be at peace with his ordinary self. Up until the end he was waiting for the world to recognize his greatness, but by then he was compounding delusion upon delusion. Even in his last days he could only find peace with himself through the help of “between four and six grains of heroin a day—he soon worked his way up to ten—as well as Veronal, ethyl oxide, cocaine, and other pharmaceuticals.”⁹ To this could be added generous amounts of alcohol. It is a wonder, and a proof of his potential greatness, that he could still write, and that some of his writing still displayed quality and genius that could touch his contemporaries. Yet despite these connections, he died utterly deprived of the comfort and warmth of family and real friendship, only passing from worshippers. His fate inspires a mix of revulsion and compassion. Here was a failed Snape who never was fully touched by the sting of regret and the spark of love.

Crowley's views have called on artists like moths to a flame. In show business Crowley's influence is pervasive. His name or his philosophy have been exalted, directly or indirectly, by Jim Morrison, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, Black Sabbath, Coven, Black Widow, Jimmy Page and Led Zeppelin, Frank Zappa, Marilyn Manson, Robbie Williams, Ozzy Osbourne (who released the single “Mr. Crowley”), David Bowie, Iron Maiden, David Tibet and his group Current 93, performance artist Genesis P-Orridge, and rapper Jay-Z. In the British music scene we find Graham Bond, R&B artist of the 60s and founder of the *Holy Magick* and *Initiation* bands, or soft-rock singer Daryl Hall of the 80s. Other cultural icons strongly influenced by Crowley have been L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology; filmmaker Kenneth Anger; and Timothy Leary, psychologist and advocate of psychedelic drugs.

One of Crowley's adepts that modern readers would not suspect, was the best-selling Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. He has in fact long since changed his tune and come out clean, offering us an inside view of a prominent part of the modern entertainment industry, how it works, and what works behind it. He is an example of a modern Snape figure. Many, who have been trapped in situations like his, have tried to turnaround without success. Coelho has become a household name and a source of inspiration for thousands worldwide. Few know what lay in his past, though he makes veiled references to it here and there in his own writings.

The Voice of a Repentant

Coelho is a figure that crossed from the world of music into literature, one who certainly knows the world of modern culture. He is now the well-known world best-seller author of *The Alchemist*, *The Pilgrimage*, *The Valkyries* and many other

⁹ Gary Lachman, *Aleister Crowley*, 299.

novels mostly exploring metaphysical topics and the question of good and evil at great depth.

In 1966, at age nineteen, Paulo had been placed by his parents in a psychiatric hospital where he had to undergo electro-shock. In 1970 he wrote an article about extraterrestrials that called the attention of another youth, Raul Seixas, a great fan of rock 'n roll. The two struck an instant friendship and started writing songs that became hits, such as on the album *Hà 10 Mil Anos Atrás* (Ten Thousand Years Ago) and the box set *Maluco Beleza* (Crazy Beautiful). Seixas died young of a pancreatitis aggravated by alcohol.

In 1972 the two had joined an occult society and founded their Alternative Society on the blueprint of the Thelema doctrine of Aleister Crowley. The Crowleyan signature is recognizable in the hymn/title song of the Alternative Society: "But if I want and you want to bathe in a hat / Or discuss Carlos Gardel / Or wait for Santa Claus / Then go! Do what you want / Well, that's all From the law! / From the law! Hooray! Hooray! / Long live The Alternative Society." Paulo and Raul had decided to put their music "at the service of the secret society. ... The verses of the songs contained declarations of principle of the sect, perceptible in a very subliminal way. They were mantras, totally technical, precise, perfect: because evil is really something quite exact," Coelho reported to Juan Arias in an interview.¹⁰ In fact there was a double meaning running throughout the artistic production. What on the surface appeared as messages of peace and freedom were in reality songs celebrating the above-mentioned messages in a veiled form.

Coelho explains to Juan Arias that he had been educated in a Jesuit school, and there lost his faith in what he describes as a negative experience. From there he found refuge first in Marxism, then in a hippie movement with a Theosophical overlay. He met various masters and explored sects and philosophies, until he looked for something stronger, "what you find to the left of the left in spiritual research." By path of the left is intended the spirituality that deliberately practices grey or black magic. This led him to reading three or four books by Aleister Crowley.

Sex had been a great appeal leading Coelho to Crowley, according to his own admissions. The sect he landed in was "a more philosophical sect, more structured, more dangerous in its roots. Within it were celebrated the conventional rituals of magic, but that was the realm of pure power. At times we invoked evil with very concrete results, but nothing was like the blackness that invaded my house [in 1974]." In 2012 in an interview with the *Sued-deutsche Zeitung Magazin* he admitted the order he had joined was a Brazilian branch of the O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis) named Luz Eterna.

Referring to the frightening episode, he says: "It was very early, and as I told you, I started to see everything turn black; I had the feeling I would die. It was a very real black, physical, visible. It was not a product of my imagination, it was something tangible. As I told you, my first impression was that of dying. ... It was as if all of a

¹⁰ Juan Arias, *Paulo Coelho: le Confessioni del pellegrino*, p. 128 in Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 266, author's translation.

sudden this candle started to make smoke, and the smoke started to invade the house: it was a very black smoke that condensed, blocking our sight for some moments, but most of all drowning us in panic. ... Maybe the worst thing was a series of noises that I would not be able to describe: they accompanied the forming of this black smoke."¹¹ And further, "I sank into panic, because that phenomenon witnessed the presence of evil."

Although Coelho decided to go to church, something held him back. "A kind of force prevented me from getting out of the house and I had very powerful sensations of imminent death. In that moment arrived the partner I had then, she too belonging to the sect. She had just experienced the same blackness. And, little by little we came to know that all the adepts had experienced the same thing. ... The presence of evil was something visible and tangible. It was as if evil were to say 'You have called me here I am.'"

Coelho corroborated much of what he said in the interview in the very largely autobiographic *An Encounter with Angels: The Valkyries*.¹² Here many things are confirmed and others added. In relating to a particular, unspecified, song he explains "It wasn't really a song—it was a mantra from a magic ritual, with the words of the Beast of the Apocalypse being read in the background in a low voice. Whoever sang the song would be invoking the forces of darkness. And everyone was singing it."¹³ He later adds that "He had practiced magic for six years. Performed all the rituals." Coelho was fascinated by the Beast: "The Beast was just for the chosen few! 'The law of the powerful,' one of his books talked about." One would imagine he is referring to Crowley's books, with which he was familiar. At the height of the experience of darkness, Coelho remembers: "He was going to die ... for so much evil spread about in the name of what was good. ... His years in the Jesuit school came back to him, and he prayed for the strength needed to get back to a church, ask forgiveness, pray that list God would save his soul."

Adding to accurate biographical events—like being placed in custody of the Brazilian political police—he then relates splitting up with his partner, disgusted by his betrayal, and distancing himself from the members of the Order, who had all successfully passed through the initiation on the same day. Coelho adds, he "was expelled from the world of music for a long time. No one would give him a job. But it was a trade."

The window that Coelho opens over aspects of an important segment of pop music and entertainment culture is confirmed, most interestingly by one who is

¹¹ Enrica Perucchietti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 269–270. A similar description of darkness comes from the experience of those who have survived suicide and remembered their experience on the other side. An example: "The darkness continued in all directions and seemed to have no end, but it wasn't just blackness, it was an endless void, an absence of light. I knew that it had its own life and purpose. ... The place was filled with a crackling energy ... a state of molecules of intense darkness, and it was purely negative, even evil" (Angie Fenimore, *Beyond the Darkness: My Near Death Journey to the Edge of Hell*, 92).

¹² Paulo Coelho, *An Encounter with Angels: The Valkyries*, 110–137.

¹³ *Ibid*, 116.

completely part of it, harboring no second thoughts, unlike the Brazilian. He just happens to be more open and verbal than most.

The Voice of an Insider

In his biography Marilyn Manson confesses quite candidly: "I could use black magic to turn the lowly lot life had given me around—to attain a position of power that other people would envy and accomplish things that other people couldn't."¹⁴

Brian Hugh Warner was born in 1969 within a year of Charles Manson's massacre in Los Angeles. Brian had a difficult childhood that marked him deeply, with many illnesses and surgeries, not to mention a perverse and fetishist grandfather. He attended the Christian Heritage School where the frequent references to the arrival of the Antichrist disturbed his dreams. He grew up with an obsession about the devil and a hate for the Catholic religion.

Brian adopted his stage name from the infamous Charles Manson and associated it to that of another culture idol, Marilyn Monroe. Note that before becoming known for the massacre alone, Manson had tried to make a name of himself in the music industry, and echoes of this production soon surfaced in Marilyn Manson's own artistic output.

Manson's debut came with *Portrait of an American Family* through Nothing Records. Already the sentence "We're gonna ride to the Abbey of Thelema" in the song "Misery Machine" presages of what is to come:

Man in the front got a sinister grin
Careen down highway 666
...
We're gonna ride to the abbey of Thelema.
...
Blood is pavement
When you ride you're ridden, when
You ride you're ridden
I am fueled by filth and fury
Do what I will, I will hurry there...

The album also includes *My Monkey* on a rhyme created by Charles Manson, and the title *The March of Pigs* bears a reference to the graffiti "PIG" of the members of the Manson family at the Los Angeles massacre. Brian had been fascinated by Charles Manson's album *Lie*. He later visited the Tate-Polanski house when Trent Reznor of Nine Inch Nails used it to record the album *The Downward Spiral*.

The next album, *Smells like Children*, bore the hit "Sweet Dreams." Manson characterized the album as a work about abuse—of drugs, and sexual, psychological

¹⁴ Gavin Baddeley, *Dissecting Marilyn Manson*, quoted in Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 205.

abuses. The album liner notes indicate that the undertone of the work is innocence as the most common target of abuse.

Already in his first shows Manson introduced elements of sado-masochism. The star entered the stage with a woman he just called Nancy on a leash. Off stage their personal relationship spiraled down with progressively more cruel physical violence. Over time the element of self-mutilation (cutting) was added, as well as spitting, aggressing the other band members, up to staging a form of orgy ritual, placing centerstage the God Pan/Dionysus as Marilyn himself. About this particular staging, the star comments: "It is in part symbolic, because if I do it in front of an audience I consider it a ritual. The practice is very ancient and powerful."¹⁵ In that sense his show is a copy of a Black Mass, originally intended as a parody of the Catholic Mass, for which Manson professes hate.

In his own words Manson harkens to a sacred masochism of sorts: "You cannot do art without pain, sex, drugs or confusion." This may reflect themes of his childhood, "in which sex, pain, perversion and spirituality were inextricably linked." His autobiography *The Long Hard Road Out of Hell* starts with "Hell to me was my grandfather's cellar. It stank like a public toilet, and was just as filthy."¹⁶ The grandparents were Jack and Beatrice Warner. His father, the violent Hugh, spent little time at home, whereas his mother was claustrophobic. Brian/Manson remembers spending his childhood terrified. One day Brian and his cousin Chad decided to discover what was hidden in Jack's basement. They were traumatized by the discovery of porno magazines, dead animals, sado-masochistic paraphernalia, bras, underwear, wigs, false phalluses, etc. When his grandfather was hospitalized after a car accident on the way to work, he wore women's clothing under his work clothes. These preliminary episodes were followed by the encounter with the adolescent satanist John Crowell, brother of a friend of Manson. Through him came an initiation to satanism. Manson passed out, vomited over and over again, but stuck through. This was the beginning of Marilyn's deliberate embracing of black magic, the one to which he refers in his biography.

Of added interest to the above was Manson's later relationship with another victim of similar background, Rose McGowan, the actress who played the witch Paige Halliwell in the television show *Charmed* and in the double-feature film *Grindhouse* of Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez. Her family had been part of the Children of God, an apocalyptic movement founded by David Berg, which predicated free sex. The family left just before there was open talk of practicing pedophilia.

Much of Warner's inspiration, in his own words, comes from being a member of the Church of Satan. Anton LaVey, its founder, whom Manson considered very much a father figure, had a much talked about affair with Marilyn Monroe, who is considered an honorary reverend of the sect and a "satanic Madonna." Manson himself is considered a minister of the order.

¹⁵ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 219.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 219-220.

At the end of this new journey of transformation, Manson decided to deliberately immerse himself in a process of self-destruction, to bring forward a personal apocalypse of sorts. This process influenced the recording of *Antichrist Superstar*. Through drugs, rituals, and self-degradation Manson had accepted to impersonate Antichrist. He concludes: "I say there is no longer any boundary line between the persona of the records and reality. I don't believe anybody really understands how much Marilyn Manson has penetrated my subconscious." He acknowledges a debt of gratitude to LaVey thus: "I incorporate satanic philosophy, more times subtly than others. It gets across the philosophy without the name 'satanism.' After people get close to me, I let them know my affiliation with the church [of Satan]."¹⁷ And he is also quite open about the experience of any of his concerts: "The concert is satanic. Just by being in the audience, you are entering my own personal satanic ritual. However, I'm not a salesman of the Church of Satan. I get adrenalin from the audience and they from me. This energy moves me, it makes me feel completely alive on stage. After the show I feel exhausted and without emotions, just like after a ritual of the satanic Bible."¹⁸

The pro-establishment Manson thus confirms the repented Coelho, practically point by point, and offers us a window on the backstage forces at work in much of today's decadent entertainment industry. What we find staged in culture at large also finds its place in the intimacy of family life. Manson's biography offered us a first glimpse of it.

Where Magic Meets Abuse

Manson recognized that the most common target of abuse is innocence, echoing Crowley's words that "Love and Knowledge drove out innocence" ("Hymn to Lucifer"). This driving out of innocence has translated in the growing numbers of an epidemic of psychological and sexual abuse. That abuse can be paired to ritualism is not a difficult stretch of the imagination, and the results of it have been documented in a way that confirms many other known psychological side-effects and throws further light on growing cultural trends. That this kind of abuse is by far the minority of abuse doesn't diminish its importance as a symptom that makes the whole of Crowley's doctrine, appeal, and strength entirely coherent.

Sara Scott interviewed thirty-six survivors of ritual abuse, who responded to questionnaires. She closely followed up nine women in the UK, and three further interviews were conducted with men in the USA.¹⁹ She courageously made room for a survivor in her personal life.

All survivors described childhood neglect, cruelty, sexual exploitation, and perverse abuse. Sara Scott adopts this definition of the particular kind of violence called ritual abuse: "Abuse that occurs in a context linked to some symbols or group activity that have a religious, magical or supernatural connotation, and where the invocation of these symbols or activities, repeated over time, is used to frighten and intimidate the children."²⁰ It is true, and she recognizes it, that it forms

¹⁷ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 232, author's translation.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 233.

¹⁹ Sara Scott, *The Politics of Ritual Abuse Beyond Disbelief*, 195.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

only a fraction of sexual abuse in general, but nevertheless, a very symptomatic one.

In her interviews survivors speak of living in families and extended peer groups in which "major rituals were meticulously planned and rehearsed, also mentioned rare moments of aesthetic or sensual pleasure in wearing beautifully made masks and costumes."²¹ However, the ecstatic dimension of the experience went much farther than a desire for accurate tradition or creed.

Within such an organization men and women, priests and priestesses, play equally important though different roles. The women could devise punishments and reprisals that they themselves, or the men, could carry out. For many of the people, especially women, to be able to carry out such a double life—of caregivers and abusers, of closet ritualists and at times even caring professionals—can become a taxing strain. Most of the women, in caretaker and abuser roles, wore a split personality, making them unpredictable, volatile, contradictory. Men displayed outright sadism, twisted humor, and in some a perverse enjoyment at taking risks, pushing the practices to new lows. Though getting out of this cycle is hard for any woman, it is close to impossible for men.

Women persist in their subordinated roles in the order of the family, but are elevated to near equal status in the performance of the ritual and the pursuit of power and pleasure. "The two seemed to be linked by a notion of 'destiny' which combined an abject acceptance of abuse and the absolution of responsibility, with some sense of power and identity gained through its fulfillment."²² Survivors understand that many of the abusers come from families with an abuse history. In fact three generations are often linked in the practice of ritual abuse.

In the context of families with routines, ritual abuse is passed down within an almost coherent set of values. Children are taught that all positive values of meekness, empathy, love, and solidarity with the weak are the lot of fools and hypocrites and the foundation of a "slave morality." The children are raised to eradicate all remnants of the "feminine-Christian" virtues, in two directions: suppressing all desire for attachment, and suppressing rage. Attachment could be erased by such a simple thing as allowing a child to grow fond of a pet, which would then be sacrificed in a cruel fashion. And great attention was given to fostering rivalries between siblings, to prevent mutual caring and support in a common aim. Each one was abused but made to think that they received a worse treatment than the others. All capacity for love had to be eradicated, to the point that the abused already see themselves as dead. Only indifference toward others could survive. Women are caught between this set of values and the reality of still being the ones that somehow were still present to offer a modicum of protection, or disguise the true nature of their relationship to their offspring.

The activity of the ritual abuse, when it is this deeply entrenched, extends to child pornography and prostitution as a means to derive economic benefit. It extends on

²¹ Sara Scott, *The Politics of Ritual Abuse Beyond Disbelief*, 102.

²² *Ibid*, 130.

the other hand to the pole of ritual human sacrifice. These ritual human sacrifices "represented 'individual rights of passage', a state of initiation of [interviewee] themselves. Inside such a framework individual moral responsibility is irrelevant, outside that framework it is everything."²³ The ritual structure and occult symbolism and meaning provide the rationale for dissociation of ends and means. Since these sacrifices are most often initiation rites, this means that other people are invited beyond the immediate circle of kin.

The severe abuse carried to such extremes leads to dissociative identity disorder, "depersonalization" and "derealization." Depersonalization means lacking a sense of clear continuity or self-identity; derealization is that feeling of not being fully able to gain a sense of the reality of the object world or of other people. With prolonged abuse different personalities live different aspects of life: there is one that goes to school, the other one that tries to carve out a modicum of regular family life, the one that is abused, and each develops a personal lifestyle. This continuous oscillation leads to an automatic switching between personalities in order to survive. In therapy "a whole inner world of children and protectors, persecutors and helpers, animals and even angels, may emerge."²⁴ A person interviewed could relate various experiences and switch from one voice, with its own intonations, to a different one without realizing it.

The whole phenomenology has an obvious protective role. In a dissociated state some survivors could watch themselves down from the ceiling; the behavior allowed them to lessen the pain, by seeing the situation remotely without associated feelings. This can also happen when a survivor is called in to be the abuser. The survivor soon reaches the inner conviction that there are two or more personalities: one completely terrified, useless, and completely submissive; the other completely evil, enraged, and violent. A survivor even "believed that these 'entities' had been 'put inside her' by those who had abused her."²⁵

In some cults it is in fact understood that certain entities would at times enter a person, because they are deserving, good satanists. There are even ceremonies with the goal of "putting Satan's slaves inside of you" to better be able to do the work. That could happen when there is fainting, blanking out, falling asleep. This has an obvious goal of allowing the person to carry gruesome tasks without fully being there, by switching out.

This diversion in what is indeed the darker side of the loss and perversion of any shred of innocence hasn't taken us too far away from the topic of entertainment culture, unfortunately. Anything we see in decidedly extreme cases has been or is commonly portrayed in the music industry.

The New Death Eaters on Stage

Magician Crowley contemplated human sacrifice. He explains in *Magick* that the key to Magic is the "cruel sacrifice," which may be the most dangerous but is the

²³ Sara Scott, *The Politics of Ritual Abuse Beyond Disbelief*, 153.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 163.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 170.

most efficient. He proposes that the perfect victim is the one that carries the greatest and purest force. For this purpose the best is the male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence. Crowley adds that this very secret ritual is "for very important goals."²⁶

When we can find certain cultural expressions espoused in some prominent cultural figures and cultural movements, as we have seen above, then we can be sure that the accompanying corollary of phenomena will appear in culture at large as well. Such has been the case with the theme of human sacrifice, and others we will follow shortly.

The group Coven was founded at the end of the sixties by musicians who were adepts of occultism and affiliated with Anton LaVey's Church of Satan. Their debut hit was called *Black Sabbath* in 1969, the same year in which the British Black Sabbath band recorded an album by the same name. The singer Jinx Dawson of Coven called herself "a ceremonial witch of the left [hand] path."²⁷ The band's 1969 debut came with "Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls." The band's album cover portrays what appears as a ritual of human sacrifice. Among the songs were "Black Sabbath," "Coven in Charing Cross," "For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge," "Pact with Lucifer," "Dignitaries of Hell," and "Satanic Mass." Below, some excerpts from "Black Sabbath":

A Gathering of dread, an awesome spectacle.
Each in his hand, a candle of black.
Their faces grave, a deathlike mask.

...

Infants' flesh they did offer
For the Prince to devour....
If witchcraft all the fools condemn,
It turns around and crushes them.
When good has been twisted,
When good has been killed,
Then love is resisted and blood will be spilled.

The last, thirteen-minute track, "Satanic Mass," sounds like the registration of a satanic ritual with invocations of Satan and other demons. It ends with the invocation of Crowley's hymn "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law" and the call "Hail Satan!"

Clive Jones of Black Widow claims, "We were the first to introduce the theme of black magic on a large scale, and ever since certain moods have become common, especially in heavy metal."²⁸ Not to be undone by Coven, Black Widow staged the performance of a human sacrifice. The band formed in 1969 with an unpublished demo *Come to the Sabbath*, followed by their first album *Sacrifice*. They were the first to extoll all the images linked to satanic rituals, before this

²⁶ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol I, 51-53.

²⁷ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 155.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 160.

found room in Heavy Metal. The band's vocalist, Kip Trevor, explained in an interview with Piergiorgio Brunelli of *Rockerilla* magazine that they based themselves on a book that described ceremonies, sacrifices, and rituals of occult practices. Black Widow went on tour for three years.²⁹ During the performance of the last track, "Sacrifice," a woman undressed and simulated the sexual act before being sacrificed. In the interview with Brunelli, Trevor explained that after vainly invoking the Good, the only way to destroy evil was by sacrificing the demon woman.

The group worked in collaboration with the occultist Alex Sanders, who founded Alexandrian Witchcraft. Sanders initiated to his rituals Sharon Tate during the shooting of *Eye of the Devil* in which Tate played the role of a witch. The movie treated the theme of blood sacrifices. Sharon was obsessed with the devil, and some of that attraction for darkness played a role in her interest in Roman Polanski, one of the kings of modern horror.

The Ultimate Desecration of Innocence

The promoters of Playboy magazine dreamed of a culture where all sexual behaviors would be permissible, and among these pedophilia. And the Playboy Foundation had ample finances to promote its agenda. One of the steps along the way is the hyper-sexualization of childhood, the last frontier of innocence that abuse would seek. The lowering of the thresholds is presaging the global acceptance and condoning of pedophilia, which is after all the only taboo left to fall.

That we are not far from it can be gleaned from the fact that the age for models is lowering; children as young as 4 to 6 display fashion clothing like older models. Pedophilia is already the theme of numerous movies: *Leon* of Luc Besson of 1994 played with this ambiguity with Natalie Portman in the role of Mathilda. After the 1996 movie *Beautiful Girls* by Ted Demme, Natalie Portman noticed that she was becoming the object of pedophilic phantasies and advances—"I was the dream of pedophiles"—which motivated her to opt for other choices. Among other movies on the same theme was the obvious *Lolita* in 1997.

The carefully orchestrated campaign toward pedophilia escalated in 2014 with the singer Sia accompanied by the eleven-year-old, already famous, Maddie Ziegler, with a body suit, make-up, blond wig, dancing like a doll in a trance in the "Elastic Heart" video. In 2019 Sia reported suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome.³⁰ The pop star brought to light sexual abuse she suffered at age nine, from which she derives her "complex post traumatic stress disorder."³¹

²⁹ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol II, 163.

³⁰ Michele R. Berman and Mark S. Boguski, "Pop Star Sia Opens Up About Her Chronic Pain". *Med-Page Today*, <https://www.medpagetoday.com/popmedicine/celebritydiagnosis/82650?eun=g1256810dor>.

³¹ See Louis Theroux, "Sia: Nine Things We Learned When She Spoke to Louis Theroux," <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3xRp7dXFv3YMQjB4YylgsvW/sia-nine-things-we-learned-when-she-spoke-to-louis-theroux>; Corey Atad, "Sia Opens Up About Dealing With PTSD And Suicidal Thoughts," *ET Canada*, <https://etcanada.com/news/663199/sia-opens-up-about-dealing-with-ptsd-and-suicidal-thoughts/>.

The Innocence to Depravity Accelerated Cycle

In 2014 the popstar Ke\$ha denounced her ex-manager Dr. Luke for continued physical and sexual abuse over ten years. Dr. Luke is also the producer of other child stars, such as Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears, and Kate Perry. Ke\$ha explained the blueprint of a young star's rise to fame. What she describes is hardly a surprise:

- Take any young, attractive girl with a good voice. The girl can be a chorus singer, a Disney prodigy, or just a middle-class child, and she is discovered by a talent scout.
- She is presented as the all-American child that could live next door in suburbia. She may sing songs inviting you to accept yourself as you are (Christina Aguilera, "Beautiful") or swear that she would never undergo plastic surgery (Madonna). At this stage Miley Cyrus was Hannah Montana.
- After a couple of albums, she may eventually undergo some changes: plastic surgery and projecting a more sexually uninhibited outer image. E.g., Taylor Momsen, who went from star of the *Gossip Girl* TV series to wearing net tights and Aleister Crowley tee shirts. But the same happened to Selena Gomez, Hilary Duff, Demi Lovato, and others.
- A continued escalation of hard videos, occult symbolism, media-released embarrassing episodes. By this time the sexual side takes over, eclipsing any possible remaining artistic merits.

The lawsuit against Dr Luke revealed he had physically, sexually, verbally, and emotionally abused a certain Mrs Sebert, to the point that she almost lost her life. He did that in order to completely control her individuality and artistic career. As to Ke\$ha, her exploitation started at age eighteen, after she signed in with Dr. Luke. It was accompanied with administering of substances that would render her unconscious and open to sexual and psychological violence. At times she would wake up naked and in pain with no memory of what had happened.³²

In a step that can cause but little surprise, occult symbolism is now associated to the very young. The same Ke\$ha appears in the "Die Young" video of 2012 as a promotion of her album *Warrior*. In the clip she dresses as a priestess, carried in a hearse by her followers, with whom she stages scenes of sexual excess. The symbolism in the background: upside down crosses, skulls, pentagrams, and triangles. The setting is even more interesting: that of an abandoned and desecrated church. Ke\$ha and her adepts proceed to destroy the church in a frenzy of sexual excitement. The sentence "We're going die young" is repeated in an obsessive manner throughout.

The same Ke\$ha wrote a tune "Dancing with the Devil," a piece that describes what happens in the musical industry. The piece speaks about selling one's soul for fame and fortune. She traces an explicit parallel between being part of the musical industry and "dancing with the devil."

I keep on dancing with the Devil (2X)
I sold my soul, ain't no turning back

³² Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol. III, 291, 292.

I keep on dancing with the Devil

You and I made a deal
I was young and shit got real
Weaving through Heaven and back ...

Your love is made of dirty gold
But I'm the only one who sold my soul
So go ahead and take my hand ...

So while I'm yours until the end
A holy war, I'll never win
So I'll keep dancing 'til I die.

Miley Cyrus rose to fame through the *Hannah Montana* TV series. At age seventeen she went through an existential crisis, from which she emerged transformed as the young rebel, completely uninhibited. In a short time she started simulating sexual acts and masturbation, or riding a huge penis. In the video "Party in the USA" she appears in a cage singing "Welcome to the land of fame excess (Whoa) Am I gonna fit in?"

At the 2013 MTV Video Awards Cyrus simulated oral sex, anal sex, and masturbation. When asked about it she commented: "I don't pay attention to the negative because I've seen this play out so many times. How many times have we seen this play out in pop music? Madonna's done it. Britney's done it. Every VMA performance, that's what you're looking for; you're wanting to make history."³³

In reply to this staging, Sinéad O'Connor wrote an open letter to Cyrus, and later commented directly on her website: "The musical industry is knowingly sexualizing seemingly artists of minor age to an audience of young kids." In such a way these kids "think that music is all about sex. It is a genius double victory for a whole industry that flirts with evil. They are preparing a whole generation to shut up."³⁴

Brooke Shields was rendered a sexy icon as a child. Her mother was also her agent. At age eleven she convinced her daughter to play the role of a child prostitute in Louis Malle's 1978 *Pretty Baby*, which included a bare breast and kiss scene. When the movie came out Brooke was twelve. In hindsight Brooke declared that although she didn't feel upset at the time, "As a mother of an 11-year-old today, I am equally clear that I, myself, would not allow my daughter to be photographed topless."³⁵ From age fifteen to sixteen Brooke became a star, in fact one of the major icons of the 1980s. New monikers for the star were: "the most celebrated virgin of our time," the "new Elizabeth Taylor," the "eighties look". Fame landed her on the cover of *Time* magazine.

³³ Enrica Perucchietti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol. III, 275.

³⁴ Ibid, 277; Soundsblog, "Sinéad O'Connor (ancora) contro Miley Cyrus: 'Dove sono i suoi genitori?'" <https://www.soundsblog.it/post/310246/sinead-oconnor-contro-miley-cyrus-dove-sono-i-suoi-genitori> author's translation.

³⁵ Ibid, 283.

Brooke's mother was an alcoholic, and her daughter started posing at age eleven for a publicity campaign for Ivory soap. The photo "Spiritual America" by Richard Prince portrays the ten-year-old in a bath tub, with makeup as an adult. The image was first published in a book of the Playboy group, *Sugar and Spice*. It was exhibited again at New York's Guggenheim in 1997 in a Prince retrospective.

Another meteoric ascent has been that of Britney Spears. According to the media the star is afflicted by dissociative identity disorder. In February 2007 Spears went to a rehabilitation clinic in Antigua, but left before spending even a full day, then entered another clinic in Los Angeles to complete a detox program. The same year she lost custody of her daughters. In 2008 she was an inpatient at the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, then at the end of a month transferred to the psychiatric wing of the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. Already in 2006 Spears had written a piece, titled *Rebellion*, in which she talks of attempting to rebel against people who are close to her and control her:

The poison they feed you
And that voodoo that they do
But in rebellion
There's a sparkle of truth ...

Her musical career went down the drain, at least until 2011, when she reemerged with the album *Femme Fatale*. At the end of 2012 Britney made the video "Scream and Shout" with hip hop artist Will.i.Am. The background continuously repeats "Britney bitch" while the theme itself is that of multiplicity, or rather splitting of the personality, a cruel staging of what seemed to be Britney's existential problem. In the clip Britney is found singing with a certain English accent, the same that she used at the height of her dissociative identity disorder.

Dissociative identity disorder has been classified as a severe form of PTSD. It goes in keeping with all the themes we have seen emerge above, whether it be satanic ritual abuse, ritual sacrifice, or just the hyper-sexualization of childhood. It is therefore no surprise that is the most recent frontier, witness the stories of Eminem and Nicky Minaj.

Splitting the Self

"Roman is a crazy boy who lives in me and he says the things that I don't want to say. He was born just a few months ago. I think he was born out of rage so he bashes everyone and he threatens to beat people and he's violent. ... I ask him to leave. But he can't. He's here for a reason. People have brought him out. People have conjured him up, now he won't leave," declares star Nicky Minaj.³⁶ Beyoncé announced Sasha Fierce as her alter-ego and Lady Gaga has her Jo Calderone. Each of these personalities emerge from the subconscious life and start imposing their presence to live an almost independent life, a sort of Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde musical partnership.

³⁶ Enrica Perucchiotti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol. III, 185.

In the video "Stan" by Eminem, Marshall Mathers stages his doubles, Slim Shady on one hand and the psychopathic fan, Stan, on the other, singing, "I'm in the car right now, I'm doin' go on the freeway Hey, Slim, I drank a fifth of vodka, you dare me to drive?" And further: "My girlfriend's jealous 'cause I talk about you 24/7. But she don't know you like I know you, Slim, no one does."

Eminem's encounter with his doppelganger came before commercial success in the aftermath of his separation from his girlfriend Kim, who had forbidden him to see his daughter Hailie Jade Scott. Reaching rock bottom he attempted suicide with Tylenol. After reconciling and marrying her, it was Kim who attempted suicide. This series of events marks the birth of the Slim Shady persona, and the album *Slim Shady* that carries Eminem to success. Among the songs "Kill You," "97 Bonnie & Clyde," and "Guilty Conscience," Slim Shady acquires a life of his own. In fact when Eminem writes as Slim Shady, he is different in the lyrics and in the voice. As the story goes, Eminem is the serious, authentic, and talented rapper; over and against him stands its shadow Slim Shady, the perfect suburban white guy with blond hair, bold and direct in his criticism of mainstream, middle-class America.

The splitting of personality continues, and we can find each personality in a different cubicle, or track, Slim Shady in *Just Don't Give a Fuck*, Eminem in *Lose Yourself*, Marshall himself in *Mockingbird*. The success pushes Eminem to fully play the Slim Shady mask, but at times the star manages to see through it: "I've created a monster 'Cause nobody wants to see Marshall no more They want Shady." And further "I'm trapped. If I could go back, I never woulda rapped, I sold my soul to the devil, I'll never get it back. I just wanna leave this game with level head intact" ("Without Me"). Similar themes are taken a step further by Nicky Minaj, who has played a duet with Eminem in "Roman's Revenge." Minaj's double is Roman Zolanski, an obvious version of Roman Polanski. Zolanski's debut took place through the singer's debut album *Pink Friday* in 2010, and the rapper introduced him as a "demon" that possessed her mind and body.

Minaj's background is illuminating of her stage persona. Onika Tanya, originally from Trinidad, had a very difficult childhood. Her violent father once attempted to kill his wife by setting the house on fire. Onika took refuge in her inner world of imaginary friendships. From here came the alter-egos that constellate her musical career: Roman Zolanski, erratic and enraged; Harajuku Barbie, the half-innocent, half-seductive Barbie with pink hair; Martha, Roman's mother who speaks with a British accent. All of these go with an elaborate stage persona, complete with eccentric costumes and wigs. In 2013 alone the singer, turned entrepreneur, cashed in \$29 million, which earned her the moniker "Midas of hip hop."

Harajuku Barbie seems the perfect empty vehicle for the demon Roman. "Roman's Revenge," in duet with Eminem, sings in crude words of sado-masochistic sex and torture, violence on women, and suicide. The text makes explicit references to the two alter egos, Slim Shady and Roman. The album *My Beautiful Darkest Twisted Fantasy* was written after a nervous breakdown, during which the star had a live confrontation with Taylor Swift. In "Monster" the singer interprets Roman and Harajuku with different intonations. In the video of the same piece the

vampire/dominatrix Roman with boots and whip tortures Harajuku Barbie, tied to a chair. The whole is heightened by hung women, corpses, zombies, and severed heads.

In "Out of My Mind" the theme of loss of control may be what unites the different personalities, or what harkens back to the real Minaj:

Don't look at me wrong, I'm out of my mind
Like Nostradamus and da Vinci combined
So paranoid of espionage
I'm watching my doors and checking my blinds
My brain is on vacation, they telling me
And I'm bi-polar to the severity
And I need medication, apparently
And some Electroconvulsive therapy ...

The video, played with rapper B.O.B., could be the perfect illustration of the trauma of someone subjected to mind control and forced brain reprogramming.

The borders between mental delusion and reality seem to get even thinner when we move to the 2012 *Pink Friday: Roman Reloaded*. The title seems to hint at Roman taking over the earlier Minaj and dictating his will over her. Could it be that this Roman is more than just an artistic creation? The 2012 Grammy Awards would lead us to believe so. Minaj exhibited herself in a choreography with a full exorcism within a black mass. The artist in red ceremonial vestments and the symbol of a medusa-head in front, was accompanied by a Wojtyla-looking false pope. In the choreographed staging Minaj mimics a confession, and alternates this with expressions of hate and lust, horrifying the pontiff. To this follows a parody of the movie *The Exorcist* in which the priest faces a blond, seductive Minaj, who declares in a loud voice that her name is Roman. The scene moves soon after to what looks like a cathedral, with Minaj tied to a sort of altar atop a pyramidal structure. The cathedral is the perfect backdrop for what follows: a dance where she portrays a sexual rapport with a priest, amid dancers acting as demons.

Having studied modern pop culture at great length, Enrica Perucchiatti concludes, "It is the doubles that take over, that write the songs and display themselves when the singer is shy."³⁷ Not surprisingly more and more videos display asylum wards, straitjackets, sex slaves, and torture.

The glorified stars that constellate popular culture have become fully dispensable, literal Death Eaters, charting their own course toward self-destruction. We see their rise to glory and already can fathom, for many of them at least, the descending path is not too far behind the corner. Some will attempt to save themselves, but for most it will be an arduous path.

³⁷ Enrica Perucchiatti, *Le Origini Occulte della Musica*, Vol. III, 191.

Those who draw the wages of fame from modern pop culture often call premature death upon themselves. Such is the case for all of those that have been referred to as belonging to the "27 Club," those who died at age 27. Among them are Robert Johnson, Brian Jones, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, and Amy Winehouse. The world of pop music is also littered by a numbers of mysterious, not fully elucidated deaths, among which are Brian Jones, Jim Morrison, Tupac, Michael Jackson, Kurt Cobain, and Whitney Houston and her daughter.

George Orwell already predicted in his *1984* that one of the most important tasks of the life of the braver new world would be the production of newspapers of the most infamous quality and of pornography of the lowest possible standards. We have discerned that much of the pop culture that generates income and wealth is literally a culture of death, and further one that spells the death of real culture.

When we look at Harry Potter's odyssey, apart from the generic Death Eaters, whose biographies we hardly know about, there is one youth who goes prematurely the downward spiral: Draco Malfoy. His conversion to Voldemort's rank and file comes at a heavy price. He is torn between the love for his family and wanting to rescue his father. His pride and spitefulness render his inner journey all the more difficult. He cannot yield to the loving concerns of Dumbledore or Snape, who see his suffering and yearn to offer genuine help. When all is lost, it is from the least expected place that salvation comes; Harry Potter himself, who has entered the inner world of Voldemort, and hopes Draco has what it takes to turn around. Meanwhile he can at least rescue him from imminent death.

Is there then an alternative to this culture of decay and death, and where do we find it? Do Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix show us the way all along? Are they pointing to something that we Muggles could also see? And how do we become wizards able to generate a part of this culture?

Chapter 4 What Would Harry Do? The New Wizards of the Light

From the moment that you set foot outside promise, in the name of the Archangel Michael, that you never again—never again—will raise your hand against yourself.

The Valkyrie, *An Encounter with Angels: The Valkyries*, Paulo Coelho

The bigger a man is, the more people he serves. A small man serves himself. Bigger is to serve your family. Bigger is to serve your tribe. Then your people. Biggest of all, to serve all men, and all lands.

The Prophet, *Prentice Alvin*, Orson Scott Card

After all, to the well-organized mind, death is but the next great adventure.

Albus Dumbledore

We have seen how the new Voldemort operates in Chapter 3. How would Dumbledore and Harry Potter act if we took them out of the books and let them visit present time? How would we act if we wanted to counter much of the present culture of death and death of culture?

Let's now ask ourselves some important questions that many other readers have probably asked themselves. Why does Hogwarts tolerate a Slytherin house? Why not just have three houses and avoid all the problems that come from having Slytherin? Why not close it down? At the very least, why not expel Draco?

This is probably not the way Dumbledore would think. The tendencies of Slytherin keep Hogwarts in touch with the reality of the larger world. The adversary has to be known from within, not suppressed. That way he can be changed. After all, we can recognize that he lives in each and every one of us anyway. And maybe this adversary plays a role in the transformation of all of us and all of society.

Consider that it is a changed Snape who spends seven years protecting Harry, quite unbeknownst to him. Consider that it is the Slytherin Snape who can keep Hogwarts afloat and mitigate the edicts of the Ministry of Magic by playing double agent with Voldemort, when the Dark Lord has risen to power. In such fashion he can keep the three other houses' potential alive for when the time is ripe.

Dumbledore has not simply been altruistic in giving Snape a second chance. Dumbledore knows first-hand the rapture of grandiose ideas for changing the world. He has succumbed to them in his youth, even though he never did more than flirt with them, we could say. Still, he has known them within and managed to

transform them. They served him to better know human nature, truly judge his fellow human beings, and offer help when needed.

The story of Snape is echoed in the Black family. Even in the heart of a family of Death Eaters, an heir is born with the strength to completely deny the ideals of his family. He can put his house in order, so to speak, and offer it for use of the Order. And his brother Regulus Arcturus? Well, he has fallen, but has done everything he could do retrace his steps and change allegiances, paying with his own life.

Dumbledore goes the whole way not only with Snape and Draco, but also with the unrepentant Umbridge. Why save her and leave her in the position to pervert the function and ideals of the whole Department of Magic?

Just as there are forces of destruction in our culture, whose nature we have briefly visited in the earlier chapter, so there are whole new ways of "doing magic" for the betterment of the world. Like Dumbledore's these are ways of "including and transcending" rather than "prevailing and destroying" a la Voldemort. They are ways of both/and, rather than either/or.

Among all the characters it may be daunting for any one of us to identify with Harry Potter, the one who can sacrifice his own life for the sake of his friends, his school, and maybe more than that. How can we possibly identify with this high ideal without hubris? Still there are closer goals at hand that can be reached, and plenty of examples of how to reach them. We can all be Hermiones or Rons to some degree.

If we want a culture different from the prevailing one, we can start promoting one that is life-affirming, rather than a producer of complete soul emptiness and death. We can seek to create one that offers us a different relationship with Self, with others and with the whole of nature.

We will now turn to what it means to gain a new relationship to self, gaining a different relationship to other human beings and to Gaia. We can explore what it takes to change ourselves so that one day we may be magicians of sorts. Or more simply, follow J. K. Rowling's insight when she said "We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: We have the *power to imagine better*"(emphasis added).³⁸ How can we develop those powers? Let's advance the idea that we may become magicians when we change the place and space from which we operate, when we strive at changing who we are and do so joyfully. A true wizard knows that there's no changing the world without first, or simultaneously, changing oneself.

The Magic of Self

We have seen how possible and common it is to render the Self fragile and fragmented, up to foregoing life itself. There are plenty of examples in a predominant world culture run amok. However, when we look at Self and life, we can easily recognize that they enclose power and magic, something that points beyond

³⁸ J. K. Rowling at her 2008 commencement address at Harvard. See <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2008/06/haa-annual-meeting/>

matter and logic. We all know of amazing stories in which life and individuality have triumphed against all odds. But have we learned everything we can from them? Can we be Hogwarts students of life? Can it be that being apprentice wizards simply means being more fully ourselves?

We have already seen the magic of Coelho's turnaround from the brink of the abyss. I want to bring here some other stories of magic, or seeming magic, that showcase the power of life and Self.

A Journey Back from the Abyss of Being: Starr Daily

In the 1920s an inveterate criminal went through hell and back and returned a changed man, one that his fellow human beings could hardly recognize. What had changed him?

In his book *Release*, Starr Daily, drawing from his life experience, captures the essence of his experience thus: "Out of the darkness a sense of destiny was born. I believe all men have a destiny, which is meaningless until it has emerged from the *sub*-nature and has become a motivating power in the *super*-nature."³⁹

As a child Starr experienced three fears. His painfully religious nature was such that the thought of his own sins would torment him for days. He prophetically feared finding himself locked in, and finding no escape from what his imagination conjured up. He feared even the mention of death. The thought of it would prevent him from falling asleep. However, as a compensation, when he was most afraid, upon falling asleep he would have very vivid dreams in which Jesus talked to him. He called these "a sort of balancing grace" for his fears.

Academically the child fared very poorly, having been endowed with a very poor memory and pronounced stage fright. After failing to win the company of his peers, he joined older men and won them over by "simply copying their vices." He explains: "This is the twist in character that makes the criminal. It is one thing to act in an antisocial way while still on the childhood side of puberty. ... The same acts, however, committed with passion, become criminal. And most confirmed criminals are men who act upon the impulses of their early childhood."⁴⁰

Soon he started imitating the worse, taking as role models John Dillinger, Bonnie and Clyde, and Al Capone. He adopted as his highest ideal that of instilling complete fear in people's hearts, managing to be already convicted twice in his twenties. He became known as one of the greatest safecrackers. All safes would yield to his singular skills, and his band robbed one bank after another, naturally landing him in jail anew. There, following his stated ideal, prisoner Daily became known as a terror. He tried to escape twice but failed. Soon he was trying again.

At first he thought a way of release by poisoning himself to receive better treatment and move to the hospital, but this failed, only causing him to feel worse and worse. At one point the physical pain merged into a "state of mental and emotional

³⁹ Starr Daily, *Release*, 59.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

terror," of which he said: "I dreamed while I seemed wide awake. It was like a scroll or motion picture film, which began to unroll slowly before my vision. And the only pictures on it were the pictures of people I had injured. It seemed there would be no end to it. Vast number of these people I knew or had seen."⁴¹ Starr had to review not only the length of his criminal career, but experience the pain he had inflicted on every single one of his victims as if it were his own. If this weren't enough agony, he then started reliving the pain of perfect strangers, those who had indirectly been affected by his crimes. This experience repeated itself a dozen times in the space of a few weeks, with an iron exactitude down to the last details, always the same.

A fortuitous event of a book passed on to him by an inmate gave him the idea of trying to induce a coma that would lead him to the hospital, but with even worse results. Now he seemed to be besieged by demons conjured up in his mind, in a condition similar to the delirium tremens of heavy drinkers. He then planned to instigate a prison riot around food quality, complete with seizing of the prison warden. Naturally, he was unsuccessful. This only landed him in the hole, a cell of 8' by 8' in which he had to spend twelve hours in upright position per day, shackled to manacles suspended from the ceiling. After that he was left lying and barely alive in the cell.

Gradually a true insight emerged. Starr now realized how much energy he had applied all lifelong to set his goals toward evil. What would happen, he thought, if he applied himself to self-improvement and real self-interest? This was in fact the basis of a reversal: "I was keenly aware of a revolutionary change taking place in my life. It was as though I were being reversed; or having been set upside down, was now being set a-right. For a long time I dwelt in an indescribable sense of awareness."⁴² The awakening was followed by a state of confused dreaming continuing for a number of days. Gradually they made way to more coherent, beautiful and meaningful dreams, much like he had in his childhood, until he came to a dream in which he was in the presence of Christ. In a feeling of bliss he experienced an outpouring of love, which he describes in paradoxical terms: "Nor had I ever felt myself so utterly helpless in the captivity of love."

He experienced the resolution of this vision as a clear spelling of the word Love, but this time it was a love that poured out of his being. His hellish experiences came back to him, but completely metamorphosed; he saw those he had hurt, and now was able to pour out his love to them. In the same vein he could extend his love to all the people who had hurt him. This brought him to an inner conclusion: "I knew I must either be changed or I would die." He became aware that he had been reborn and that he could be free. He was now visited by spiritual presences imparting him "Love, Wisdom and Faith." To one with very little formal education, these were like spiritual teachings that he carried in his heart long after the experience, and which molded his whole life.

⁴¹ Starr Daily, *Release*, 54-55.

⁴² *Ibid*, 64.

Journeys Back from Uncurable Illness

Anita Moorjani was born of Indian parents in Singapore, then lived in Sri Lanka and settled in Hong Kong. Having spent years fearing and seeking protection from real and imagined illnesses, she was diagnosed with lymphoma that spread from her neck. She first resorted to alternative medicine, before undergoing conventional cancer therapy. When admitted in the year 2006 the doctors felt it was too late and had little hope, since the lymphoma had invaded her body and metastasized. She had extensive organ failure and entered a thirty-hour coma. During this time she had the typical unfolding of events of those who undergo a Near Death Experience (N.D.E.), with heightened sensorial awareness and a sense of well-being that was hard to overcome in the decision to return to her body, strengthened by the encouragement to "live her life fearlessly."

After she returned to full awareness, the tumors shrank by 70% over just four days. The recovery was so full and speedy that after five weeks she was completely healed, even though she had to take a few months of physiotherapy to regain full use of her body. Recalling the time on the other side, she realized that she continued to exist and felt: "I haven't ever been this huge, this powerful, or this all-encompassing. Wow. I've never, ever, felt this way."⁴³ She also understood that "the cancer was not some punishment for anything I'd done wrong, nor was I experiencing negative karma as a result of any of my actions. ... My many fears and my great power had manifested as this disease." Coming out of it she concluded: "I saw everything with new eyes, as though I were a child again. The view couldn't have been more ordinary, yet it was the best I'd seen in a long time ... maybe ever."⁴⁴

The recorded doctor's assessment read: "A chronological account of Anita's illness ... In the spring of 2002, she noticed a firm swelling just above her left collar bone. ... By Christmas 2005, her course accelerated, and she began a downward spiral ... the disease in her neck and chest wall was infiltrating the skin, resulting in large infected ulcers that would not heal. Unable to eat or absorb nourishment, weight loss, marked fatigue, muscle wasting ... and her kidney functions started to be compromised."⁴⁵ The medical records show that her organs had shut down by the time she had entered the hospital. Needless to say Anita came out of the experience with a renewed zest for life and sense of mission.

As extraordinary as this experience is in and of itself, it follows seventy years after that of Bill Wilson's 1934 N.D.E., described in A.A.'s *Big Book*: "My depression deepened unbearably and finally it seemed to me as though I were at the bottom of the pit. I still gagged badly on the notion of a Power greater than myself, but finally, just for the moment, the last vestige of my proud obstinacy was crushed. All at once I found myself crying out, 'If there is a God, let Him show Himself! I am ready to do anything, anything!' Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light. I was caught up into an ecstasy which there are no words to describe. It seemed to me, in my mind's eye, that I was on a mountain and that a wind not of air but of spirit was blowing. And then it burst upon me that I was a free man. Slowly the ecstasy

⁴³ Anita Moorjani, *Dying to Be Me: My Journey through Cancer, to Near Death, to True Healing*, 69–70.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 99.

subsided. I lay on the bed, but now for a time I was in another world, a new world of consciousness. All about me and through me there was a wonderful feeling of Presence, and I thought to myself, 'So this is the God of the preachers!' A great peace stole over me and I thought, 'No matter how wrong things seem to be, they are still all right. Things are all right with God and His world.'"⁴⁶

Consider the following. Here was the case of an inveterate alcoholic at the last, irreversible stage of the illness. A man who should have logically died, not only survived; he lived another thirty-seven years and went on to accomplish the prodigious work of A.A. that cured hundreds of thousands of alcoholics and other people addicted to other substances or behaviors worldwide. Herein lies yet another shining example of the magic of life and of Self.

It seems there are no limits to what the Self can endure and transform, witness the next two examples.

Journeys Back from Protracted Death

Two biographies have quite impressed me recently because they push the boundaries of physical survival beyond what is barely credible. How long can life cease before we are irreversibly dead? Is it a question of five, ten, twenty minutes after the last pulse or breath? Try ninety.

Ninety Minutes in Heaven is a movie based on real events, on the life of Don Piper, a Baptist minister. In January 1989 he was returning home from a conference when tragedy struck: an eighteen-wheeler truck hit his Ford Escort while he was crossing a bridge, crushing the roof of his car. As soon as they reached the scene of the accident, the paramedics could not find any sign of life and covered his body with a tarp for one and a half hours before they returned to the scene. The truck had pushed the dashboard over his legs and the steering wheel into his chest. It was impossible to remove the body until the arrival of medics with the Jaws of Life.

The right leg, including the knee, was crushed. The left leg was shattered in two places and four inches of femur were missing; the left arm was still barely attached, and the lower part, completely limp, barely held the hand in place. In fact, all limbs except the right arm broke. Many glass particles were embedded in his face. Blood was coming out of his eyes, ears, and nose. The doctors were later amazed he did not lose all his blood.

As chance had it, a fellow pastor later arrived on the scene and felt impelled to pray for the victim in spite of being told he was dead. Over the ninety minutes in which he was clinically dead, Piper described the heavenly side of experiences one can have in an N.D.E. He first saw a light with a brilliance beyond earthly comprehension, then met with all his loved ones. Experiencing a feast for the senses, he felt no regrets about leaving family or possessions, no longing to return to earth. As he moved toward ever more brilliant light, he also started to first hear a celestial music, then felt part of it: "It seemed as if I were part of the music—and it played in

⁴⁶ Alcoholics Anonymous, *The Big Book*, 1957 edition, 63.

and through my body. ... I felt embraced by the sounds."⁴⁷ Everything grew in intensity until he was abruptly called back to his earthly plight.

He returned to his body in excruciating pain due to the massive injuries and had to undergo a protracted and painful recovery before gaining some use of his limbs. During an operation it was further ascertained that Don had a broken bone in his right leg and two inches missing from both bones in the left forearm. A fractured pelvis wasn't even noticed until a few years later. The damage was so extensive that even after recovery one of Don's legs is shorter than the other, and he hasn't fully recovered the use of an arm.

Similarly to Don Piper, the survival of John Smith, a fourteen-year-old adopted Guatemalan boy of Saint Louis, challenges our common understanding of physical limits. This too is portrayed in a 2019 movie titled *Breakthrough*. In January 2015 John was playing with his two friends on the frozen surface of a lake. The three fell through the ice; only John didn't reemerge. The rescue team arrived at the scene, without managing to locate John. As they were about to give up one of the rescuers heard an inner voice prompting him to continue and inwardly directing him to where John was. John did not recover pulse or breath by the time he got to the hospital, even after the emergency team tried to revive him. They therefore entrusted him to the mother, who prayed for him. She detected a feeble pulse, after which John was transferred to a better equipped hospital. Even though the new doctor saw little hope, he placed John on a medically induced coma. Before long the mother, in agreement with the doctor, decided to interrupt the coma-inducing drugs, which were starting to poison the child. Contrary to all expectations, John started gradually reviving and left the hospital after sixteen days.

The phenomenon of Near Death Experiences has been with us for many decades now, and it does not cease to bring forth new dimensions of the human experience. For anybody interested in exploring this further there are many first-hand accounts and extensive overviews on the theme.⁴⁸

Understanding the Self: Three Giants of the Mind

The shining miracles of Self and life do not exclude death; they include it and transcend it. All the individuals mentioned above have truly died and been reborn. They have tasted death, but not as a final sentencing. They have found a new rooting in the Self, a new assurance, a new hold on life through death.

What is this power that lives in every individual, no matter how little we honor life and any life-affirming values, no matter how sick we are, and no matter how far we have gone past the limits of physical endurance? If we truly let life events and reality touch us and allow us to ask questions, then we can enter a lifelong quest

⁴⁷ Don Piper with Cecil Murphey, *Ninety Minutes in Heaven: A True Story of Death and Life*, 30.

⁴⁸ For overviews of N.D.E.s see: P. M. H. Atwater, *Beyond the Light: The Mysteries and Revelations of Near-Death Experiences*; Gregory Scott Sparrow, *Witness to His Return: Personal Encounters With Christ*; Luigi Morelli, *A Revolution of Hope: Spirituality, Cultural Renewal and Social Change*, chapters 3, 4 and 5.

for what it means to be human. This is the quest that many worthy minds have pursued at all times and all places.

Let's look at three giants of our time who have explicitly stated the value of the Self and mapped paths that each individual can take: Carl Gustav Jung, Roberto Assaggioli, and Rudolf Steiner. I know I will not do justice to them in writing just a few paragraphs, and I also realize I leave many others behind. The following is therefore just meant in way of an appetizer for all apprentice magicians. May you find the inspirations you need.

Carl Gustav Jung

The Swiss Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) was the founder of analytical psychology, who left great contributions to the fields of psychiatry, psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and religious studies. He also vastly influenced literature.

What stands out in his background was his immersion in religion. Not only was his father a rural pastor in the Swiss Reformed Church; his mother was the daughter of a pastor of the same denomination, later chosen as the head of the church in Basel.

Jung was greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud, with whom he collaborated for a number of years early on in his career. However, he soon departed from him because of his broader interest in the importance of what he called the collective unconscious. It wasn't just a theoretical interest that stood at the root of the divergence. It was something much more existential.

In his late thirties Jung had to confront what came to him from the unconscious in visions after vision, to the point where he feared being engulfed by it and losing his sanity. His creative work of journaling and painting in what he called his *Black Book* allowed him not only to survive but also to map out the archetypal journey of the soul as it emerges from the symbolism of dreams in correlation with religious and spiritual traditions. He had tapped into the archetypal dimension of the soul's journey of individuation.

The recognition of the archetypes of the soul was central to all of Jung's psychology. In the world of our souls, everything is in a state of continuous flux or becoming. The archetypes are creative beings in perpetual creative activity. No spiritual archetype works alone; each takes on innumerable forms and works in evolving relationships with other archetypes. Central to all of these is the archetype of the Self, and its spiritual dimension is what finally differentiated Jung's psychology from other directions psychology had taken until then.

Jung saw the Self standing above the ego mediating between daily ego-consciousness and the unconscious. It is the archetype of wholeness at the center of the soul. In dreams it appears as the hero, the savior, the king, the prophet. The mandala, standing for a totality—an encompassing whole—or the taijitu symbol with the integration of yin and yang—unity of opposites into a higher unity—are apt symbols for the Self.

Jung saw in the figure of Christ the highest example of the archetype of the Self, an image of the deity in the human soul. He recognized in Christ's biblical descent into Hell, during the time between his death and resurrection, the archetype of the integration of the collective unconscious. In sum his had been a minor form of descent into Hell, from which he had returned strengthened by a stronger connection to the Self. With his own personal journey Jung had thus revisited the faith of his heritage, which he could no longer accept. He could now raise it to a new level of consciousness through the journey of personal discovery, which he called individuation. With this name he referred to the integration of various aspects of the personality. What causes conflict when still unconscious can be raised to the surface of consciousness and integrated. What would otherwise become neurosis or psychosis can now be transformed and its energy made available for individual development for being able to operate at a higher level of awareness.

The process of integration is a never-ending one, since such is the depth of the collective unconscious, nor can it ever take the same form in any two individuals. Nevertheless some stages along the way can be recognized. In a first step we can reclaim and transform our shadow. Jung saw in this all the unethical aspects, which the ego rejects and projects upon others. With time and effort we can stop projecting and start recognizing these aspects as internal, rejected parts of our subconscious. The recognition can bring transformation and healing.

Next we come to aspects that constellate parts of the personality and yet are more universally human; such are the aspects of "anima" for the man and "animus" for the woman, the complementary feminine in man, masculine in woman. Taking the anima as example, this is the aspect of the soul that reigns at first in the relationship of son and mother, then of husband and wife. Here is where we can see how Jung linked understanding of the soul with the heritage of myths and spiritual traditions. The education of the soul can take place first through the anima taking us into erotic love, then through soul friendship, and finally in the image of the goddess Isis, or the Virgin Mary, becoming here spiritual guides.

A set of images that can come later in the journey are those relating directly to the world of the spirit and appearing in dreams as the priest, the guru, the professor, the wise man, or any other figure that can offer us guidance and lead us to wholeness, to our becoming fully individual. No matter how inspiring any such meeting can be, it must be remembered that a journey of individuation is something that can be approached, but not completed, in a lifetime.

Another aspect of the innovations of Jung's integration of the unconscious is the call to the imagination, or rather the particular form of it he called "Active Imagination." His biography itself, in the years of his major life-crisis, illustrates what this is. Jung advocated using images from vivid dreams by recalling them and allowing them to evolve according to their will. Art is a medium of choice to accompany this process. In his instance this had been journaling, drawing, and painting. Music, dance, sculpting, and other art forms can be added to the repertoire. The whole object is a conversation with our unconscious, allowing it to bring more material to the surface of consciousness.

Roberto Assagioli

Assagioli's psychosynthesis and Jung's psychoanalysis are transpersonal psychologies that explore the transcendental aspect of the human being. They both include the concept of the unconscious, and they look at the human being as a whole, approaching him from the perspective of the attainment of maximal health, rather than the lens of pathologies. Having the advantage of following such a great master as Jung, Assagioli could further build on the vast edifice of work and thought of the master.

Assagioli was born in Venice, Italy, in 1888 from a middle-class Jewish background. Though a scientist at heart, Assagioli's early education came with emphasis on art and music, which left an imprint on his idea of psychosynthesis, according to his own later judgment. By age eighteen he had learned eight different languages, three of them classical—Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit—plus Italian, English, French, Russian, and German. In his youth he traveled to Russia, drawn by his interests in social systems and politics.

Though he rarely spoke of his biography, clearly the ordeal of Italian Fascism colored much of Assagioli's outlook and tempered his individuality. Assagioli married in 1922 and had an only child. In 1940 he was arrested by the Fascist government and kept in solitary confinement for twenty-seven days before being released. During the war his family farm was destroyed and Assagioli went into hiding in the Tuscan mountains. Under this continuous stress his son, Ilario, died at age twenty-eight.

Assagioli found much of his inspiration for psychosynthesis through his response to solitary confinement in 1940. With the help of daily meditation he turned this deprivation into the opportunity to exercise his mental will. He had devised a way to investigate his inner world. The calm years after the war offered the psychologist time to create a number of foundations dedicated to psychosynthesis in Europe and North America.

Assagioli graduated in neurology and psychiatry in Florence in 1910. Already then he wrote articles criticizing the limits of a deterministic focus on psychoanalysis and arguing for more holistic views. Knowing German, Assagioli decided to train in psychiatry at the Burghölzli psychiatric hospital in Zürich. The proximity to C. G. Jung was no doubt a draw for the location.

Assagioli started to correspond with Freud, whom he never met. The doctor recognized psychosynthesis's debt to psychoanalysis, though he only saw it as a preliminary stage. He was much more indebted to the analytical psychology of C. G. Jung, by thirteen years his elder. The two probably first met in 1907, and Assagioli worked with both Jung and Eugen Bleuler, one of the pioneers in the understanding of schizophrenia.

One of Assagioli's major contribution to his field is the twin aspect of the importance of the will and the influence of the future. He recognized that we are certainly influenced from the past and often carry heavy burdens therefrom. Therefore psychosynthesis pays great attention to this dimension. However, the

future too calls us to fuller self-realization, and ignoring this call can come at the price of psychological disturbances.

At bottom what Assagioli called the "superconscious" unites us with that realm from which the human being has separated herself. The call of the will serves to reconnect us to this realm of the divine, where we find our own essential nature. Psychosynthesis is thus offered as a journey of reconnection.

The Self that stands at the boundary between the personal and the universal/divine is itself of a spiritual nature. It imbues us with a love that unites what is immanent with what is transcendent. The Self takes the "I" tied to our human nature in a journey of healing through the raising of our consciousness.

It is through the will that we can start this journey of personal integration, a journey for reaching toward the call of the divine. It is the will that we need to summon at crises and turning points, in which we hear the call from the deeper source of our being, the Self. Ultimately, we can render our more earthly I a vehicle for serving the eternal Self.

Once we take on our journey consciously, we can learn to self-analyze and recover a more conscious relationship to the world. In this effort we can look for help in poetry, music, and other arts. In general terms we could call this the realm of imagination, in which we find the language of dreams, stories, metaphors, and everything that uncovers meaning. Assagioli, like Jung, led us into the field of imagination. We can continue this thread with Steiner.

Rudolf Steiner

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) was born in present-day Croatia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He worked at different times of his life as a scientist, philosopher, lecturer, and social reformer, and contributed greatly to the fields of medicine, education (Waldorf schools), agriculture (Biodynamic agriculture), and architecture. In general terms he offered a wide array of impulses for cultural renewal.

For what we are exploring here we could say that the work of Steiner inserts itself in continuation of Jung and Assagioli through an extension of the phenomena-based approaches of the first two. Steiner spent the first decades of his career promoting the Goetheanistic understanding of science, an approach that claims that phenomena alone are the key to an understanding of reality that eschews theories and hypotheses.

It is only because we do not discipline enough the tool of the intellect that we rush to incomplete theories of the world. Goethe, with his work on plant development, physiology, and theory of light, inaugurated a scientific method in which the vast multitude of secondary phenomena brings us close to a limited number of gestures, or "primary phenomena." Once we come closer to these, we can apprehend the deeper reality of polarities and archetypes at work in nature and in the human being. It was thus that Goethe formulated the idea of the metamorphosis of the plant, and described what he perceived spiritually as the archetype of the plant.

A great difference between Goetheanism and deterministic science lies in how we view exceptions and abnormalities. In classical science the abnormality throws a monkey wrench on the theory, so that we could say the theory works for only 80%, 90% of what we observe, and periodically has to be dismissed or revised. Goethe actively sought the "abnormal." In it he perceived an important aspect of the whole that lay hidden, secondary phenomena that shed additional light on the primary phenomena and opened a key to the observation and understanding of the whole. His work on the plant shines through the understanding of plant abnormalities. Each one of these was for him a gift that offered a glimpse on what otherwise remains hidden.

Goethe had a great gift for observation and a particular way of thinking grounded on phenomena, but he could not formulate his path in universal terms for others to follow. Steiner devoted many years to the study of the scientific Goethe in order to lay the basis of spiritual science, first of all in his philosophical/experiential opus, *The Philosophy of Freedom*. In essence he rendered Goethe fully accessible and marked a path that goes from phenomenology to spiritual science.

The further steps that Steiner took from *The Philosophy of Freedom* are the recognition of other forms of cognition, beyond daily consciousness. The foundation for these have already appeared in Jung's and Assagioli's recourse to poetry, myth, and active imagination and Goethe's thoroughly artistic consciousness. Imagination, systematically developed, is in fact the first step of a form of cognition that transcends dualistic thinking. In Goethe this Imagination had been attained by completely integrating the scientific and artistic perspectives. In essence we could say that if Goethe was a better scientist, then he owed it to his ability to integrate a thoroughly artistic perception.

Rudolf Steiner devised a path of knowledge that passes from daily consciousness to the full attainment of Imagination. Beyond these are Inspiration and Intuition that would take us to far afield in the present few pages. Steiner's own revelations stemmed from these higher stages of cognition but can, indeed need to, be vouchsafed through the sound scientific thinking of our time.

The phenomena that presently appear in the Near Death Experience are the key for the understanding of the path of individuation and for the life after death, even though not all the phenomena appear in every single experience. Some may not be present in one, or may not have been recalled after the fact, but a sequence forms that unfolds in a regular way and certain steps become recognizable.

The phenomena alone speak of a time in which we see the scroll of our lives, a later encounter with everything that is still unredeemed in our lower self that comes with the painful perception of the pain we have brought to others. It is followed by a glimpse in the great beyond and the nature of the divine Self. In Steiner's terms we have first of all a "life review" in which we see everything in front of us as if simultaneously. We then have what he called "kamaloka," borrowing from Eastern tradition, in which we retrace in reverse order the events of our lives, from death to birth. In it we have the encounter with the Lower Guardian of the Threshold, which in classical literature is known as the Angel of Death. Later on we will reach the gates of the Higher Guardian of the Threshold, the one from which we

receive light and love and new assurance for our path on Earth. This is the hallmark of much of the literature around N.D.E.s.

When we look back at what has preceded we can recognize that Jung went through a phase of *kamaloka* in his mid-life crisis, from which he wrested a wealth of images and symbolism, which pointed to universal elements of human experience, which he called archetypes. Starr Daily too went through a harrowing experience of his own shortcomings. He recognized its phenomenological lawfulness because it repeated itself in exactly the same way over a dozen of times. Bill Wilson went through his own personal hell of alcoholism before grace brought him, so to speak, to the mountaintop and offered him new vistas. He came to the last stage, in which he experienced light and love. It allowed him to come back a new man and offer the world a universal path to healing. Rufus Moseley, George Ritchie, Betty Eadie, Dannon Brinkley, Henri Nouwen, and many others have gone through this last experience and documented it extensively.

The whole of Harry Potter is in great measure woven around the Deathly Hallows, it is true. But there is another unsung hero that continuously and discreetly weaves in the background: Fawkes the phoenix, who gives his name to Dumbledore's Order. The phoenix is that image of the eternal Self which dies and is reborn from the ashes. When we understand our Self as our link to the eternal, in a deeper sense we can become magicians. We could call Jung, Assagioli, and Steiner modern magicians. They have in effect striven to render us more conscious of our divine nature, of the nature of a Self that is akin to the phoenix.

Armed with new knowledge, we can perceive the world in a new way. When we acquire an unshakeable certainty of our immortal Self, then the theater of operations in the physical world becomes a new reality. We learn not to take things literally. We learn that the fabric of life and of the Self are tremendous imaginations waiting to be awakened. Every individual life is in fact such an incredible imagination, if we don't let it drown under life's trials. Immersed within this larger reality, our actions, indeed every single action, have importance and impact. With the magic of the Self we can gain the optimism we need in times like the third millennium to embark on bold enterprises of transformation.

In reading good fiction we immerse ourselves in Imaginations of great quality and relevance. Such is the case of the Harry Potter saga. This is why we can understand it at many levels. We can just ride the wave and savor the adventure. We can see various elements of an allegory, and we can perceive it as a full-bodied Imagination. By degrees we can penetrate it and let it speak more and more deeply to our soul, until it continues to bring up new images and new thoughts. In reading it a second time our personal connection will be deepened. This book is an attempt in that direction. I'm sure, and relieved, that it doesn't exhaust the power of the Harry Potter Imagination. It couldn't possibly! It only invites the reader to go deeper and raise ever new aspects of this Imagination to consciousness.

The Magic of Us

As we learn to see the Self as the actor of change in the world, so can we see the union of awakened Selves as the true avenue to social change—not party slogans

or platforms. Hermione doesn't want to bow down to Umbridge. Together with Harry and her fellow students, she forms Dumbledore's Army. The students have discovered the power of each other, and this will form a thread up to the end. In time the students become bolder and bolder. Awkward, insecure Neville Longbottom rises to a stature hardly imaginable; Luna ambles on in her quiet, unassuming, and steady way to join perception and balance to quiet resolution; Ginny has overcome all embarrassment and shyness.

Change happens from how we insert ourselves in the social fabric, how we conceive of working with others. It comes from transformative practices that render us new while supporting our uniqueness, awakening us to what the spirit wants of us. Since we are only at the beginning of this kind of magic, what we see are just small examples. It is our imagination that must allow us to see the future magic present in these small, though still impressive, beginnings.

Through Death and Rebirth in the Rio Favelas

Apart from its appeal as tourist destination, Rio is also known as one of the most violent cities on earth. In the spiraling of violence the government intermittently realizes that all purely punitive interventions only serve to feed a growing downward pattern.

The city's estimated 100 favelas (25% of the population), where the people struggle for subsistence contrasting with the luxurious beaches and hotels, epitomize the present state of globalization. Favelas are shantytowns, semipermanent communities of unsanitary, multistory houses. All aspects of social life and cohesion are subjected to fear, waves of martial law, and the daily struggle against poverty. In this reality of despair, drug gangs are the favelas' largest youth employer. Within this backdrop the old paradigm of brutal police repression accelerates the problems it is supposed to fight. The police itself are not only seriously underpaid but also exposed to unusually high levels of risk. This is the breeding ground for a permanent corruption through which some policemen are often the first beneficiaries of drug trafficking and its perpetuation.

Anderson Sa is the son of one of Rio's favelas, Vigario Geral, also known as "the Brazilian Bosnia." He knows about this permanent culture of death firsthand, so much so that he dreamt of a better future through the drug army. However, he also yearned to improve the life of the favela itself. In August 1993 the police lost one of its most hated caciques (political boss) to the drug lords. The response was immediate and random: the policemen went on a rampage, killing twenty-one people in the favela whose only fault was living in Vigario Geral. Anderson Sa lost a brother in the massacre. He experienced powerlessness, resentment, and hatred, until he opted for a way out of violence and joined forces with Jose Junior, who for years was campaigning for a cultural renaissance in the favela. The two knew initiative was in their hands since they could expect little or nothing from the government.

The meeting led to the birth of Afroreggae, which has been documented in the documentary *Favela Rising*. The group was formed in 1993, and originally centered around a newsletter. Soon after, it started offering classes of percussion, dance,

soccer, capoeira, and recycling. The work of Afroreggae became highly successful in Vigario Geral, where fewer and fewer youths enrolled in the narco-cartels.

Narco-trafficking places enormous constraints into the lives of favela residents. A ceasefire between Vigario Geral and neighboring favela, Lucas, came to an end after twenty years. Lucas invaded Vigario Geral. Sa felt impelled to take a role to prevent bloodshed, because residents were protecting the drug armies and slander was circulated about Sa himself. He was accused of taking up arms, chasing away Lucas residents, and even of rape and holding hostages. Even though these accusations had no foundation in facts, they were widely believed in Lucas and brought two hundred residents up in arms with the intent of lynching Anderson. In a quandary Anderson decided to stay in the community center in which he found himself at that moment, because leaving was like admitting guilt; to his relief he received the support of all his close collaborators. Loudly yelling their neutrality from both parties, they faced the attackers serenely. It was a Lucas drug-lord, stunned by their courage, who convinced others to listen, in fact saving them from the mob. In Lucas, Afroreggae then started a project aptly called Breaking Borders in October 2001. The project introduced information technology in addition to workshops in capoeira, comic strips, and violins.

Anderson Sa's personal history is highly emblematic of the whole process of cultural renewal. It is not surprising therefore to see the following experience in the documentary *Favela Rising*. In 2004 Anderson Sa experienced a traumatic accident while surfing, causing the rupture of the fourth vertebra, which in the great majority of cases leads to quadriplegia. In the accident Anderson fell unconscious and was rescued out of the water by friends and brought to the hospital. The emergency operation was performed by Dr. Niemeyer, who happened to know about the work of Anderson Sa and Jose Junior and offered to work free of charge.

The odds stood against Anderson Sa, who effectively came out of the ordeal paralyzed, as the footage in *Favela Rising* shows. At that time the favela fervently prayed for his recovery. After the operation he was with a few friends in the hospital room when, out of nowhere, a lady appeared who walked toward Anderson Sa. She announced "A God has asked me to come and talk to him. ... This is the god who moves the sea and he will give you the victory sooner than imagined." Two days later, a visibly affected Anderson Sa walked with effort out of the hospital, and in the following weeks patiently worked at rehabilitating part after part of his body until he recovered its full use.

Anderson Sa refers now to the paralysis as a fitting image of where the will of the favelas stands for most of Rio de Janeiro and for where it stood in Vigario Geral, prior to the work of Afroreggae. The success of the organization indicates that breakthroughs and turn-arounds are possible when working from an approach that is culture-centered, inclusive, and nonadversarial. Many of these elements reappear in the next story.

Women for Peace in Liberia

The 2008 documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* is a powerful retelling of how women, armed with the sole desire for peace, ended the civil war in Liberia and

brought to power the first woman president in Africa in 2005. It is a great message of hope in what appears to be a simple approach to turning the worst of conditions on their head; simple, yes, but not easy. The difference between success and defeat lies in the internal resources tapped into, in qualities like forgiveness, hope, and fierce and indomitable determination.

The women of Liberia, in a two-and-a-half-year campaign, have forced the armies of dictator Taylor and those of the opposing warlords to come to the peace table, and helped send the tyrant to exile, set up an interim government, and held free and fair elections. All of this started with a bold step and a meeting across a large social divide.

Leymah Roberta Gbowee was a social worker who worked with the ex-child soldiers of President Taylor's army. Working with them she could see how much they too were victims. In a short time Leymah joined the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) and brought all the women of the Christian churches together into a group called the Christian Women's Initiative. The turning point of coalition building came at a service in which Leymah articulated her requests to the church members and a woman rose up with a loud "Praise the Lord" and presented herself as Asatu Bah Kenneth, the president of the Liberia Female Law Enforcement Association, and a Muslim.

Soon a new coalition was formed with the women of the Muslim organizations in Monrovia, the capital. The coalition managed to force a meeting with President Taylor and extract a promise from him to attend peace talks in Ghana with the rebels. Gbowee then led a delegation of Liberian women to Ghana to continue to apply pressure on the warring factions during the peace process.

Liberia was a country engulfed by senseless war. Child soldiers were armed, with license to kill, pillage, and rape at will. They were inebriated by all these acts of violence and the feeling to be ceremonially adopted into adulthood; additionally a lot of the violence occurred under the influence of drugs. The blind thirst for power of men like Taylor is accompanied by immense hubris and denial. Taylor regularly attended church and invoked his Christian faith. His opponents were all but ready to do the same as Taylor once in power.

Can the bullets pick and choose between Christians and Muslims? is the basic question that rallied women of both faiths. The women's campaign was based on the simple desire for peace, and on parties being able to hear each other; nothing more, nothing less. It mixed great measures of forgiveness and equal determination. Wearing white T-shirts and rallying with banners for peace, this was the first time that Muslims and Christians banded together. Together they put pressure on pastors, priests, and imams to break the silence.

All sorts of ideas emerged, ranging from the playful to the serious. At one point the women decided to start a sex strike to motivate men to join them in prayers and support for the common cause. But the negotiations in Ghana were altogether another matter. When after six weeks the talks were stalling, the women did not hesitate to invade the meeting hall and form a cordon that did not allow delegates to

leave, proceeding then to outline their conditions. Little did the women know that they had gained the support of the international community, which threatened to cut funds to all parties if no breakthrough was reached.

Over time this campaign led to an agreement between the opposing parties, an interim government leading to free elections, and the first woman president in Africa, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Curitiba: A Convenient Truth

We go once again to Brazil with a completely different example, that of the comparatively affluent Curitiba at the other end of the country from Rio. Provocatively titled *A Convenient Truth: Urban Solutions from Curitiba*, a 2006 documentary offers solution after solution to the problems plaguing the cities of the world, in a manner quite intriguing to this author. It isn't that Curitiba does not know all of the problems of large cities all over the world, including poverty, pollution, and overcrowding. What's different about Curitiba is that its planners have come up with some very creative and inexpensive ways to solve universal problems. And the result is truly inspiring and self-sustaining.

Curitiba, in the southern state of Paraná, has grown from some 140,000 in the 1940s, to more than 430,000 in 1960, and around 2 million at present. In 1964, responding to the mayor's call for proposals that would prepare Curitiba for new growth, a team of young, idealistic architects and planners from the Federal University of Paraná, led by Jamie Lerner, laid out plans to minimize urban sprawl, preserve Curitiba's historic district, and provide accessible and affordable public transit. The proposal evolved and became the Curitiba Master Plan.

The 1980s were marked by widespread economic recession, rising urban poverty, and increasing deforestation rates in Brazil. Curitiba, however, inaugurated new ecological and social programs, including establishing new regional administrations helping to decentralize government; expanding Curitiba's transit system; initiating a citywide recycling program that separates organic waste, plastic, glass, and metal; inaugurating a number of parks dedicated to the different ethnic and immigrant groups; and protecting "green areas" from future development.

The first step taken by Mayor Jaime Lerner was to create the first pedestrian downtown street in Brazil. Another key idea was the planning of "linear centers," placing the development of the city in decentralized fashion all along the major axis of transportation. The administration removed new construction from downtown by placing it in new areas where rapid mass transit would be available, and added major services, schools, and infrastructure, close to the major arteries of transportation.

Natural land-use patterns within the city of Curitiba were devised to support public transit systems, and vice-versa. Buildings along the dedicated bus ways are up to six stories tall, gradually giving way, within a few blocks, to single-story homes. This mix of densities ensures sufficient user population within walking distance of bus stops.

Some of the key ingredients to Curitiba's success in becoming a world eco-capital lay in overall simplicity, a win-win mentality—the problem for one is often the solution for someone else, decentralization of development and government, anticipation of problems to come, adapting ideas as you go, admitting and correcting the mistakes promptly, encouraging citizens to live closer to where they work, placing initiative where knowledge and interest lay, and successful partnerships between public and private sector.

The city adopted a trinary road system designed to optimize the flow of traffic. The new system comprises a central street for local traffic and public transportation, flanked on either side by fast-moving one-way streets for the commute traffic in the two directions. The middle section has a central two-lane street restricted to buses, police, ambulances, etc. and adjacent lanes for local car traffic.

The whole system occupies some forty-five miles. At rush hour buses travel within a minute from each other, and there are stops within 1,300' in average. Sixty percent of Curitibaans take the bus to work, all social classes included. To maximize passenger load, red multicabin buses carrying up to 270 people each were integrated into the transit system, and high-speed bus stops, called tubes, were created to facilitate access to the buses. The system is all in all a surface alternative to a subway, comparable in speed and efficiency, for a fraction of the cost. The transportation network is operated by the city in partnership with private companies: it does not cost the city anything to run and allows the companies to make a profit.

In the early days civil engineer Nicolau Klüppel proposed to Mayor Lerner to send collection trucks to the poorer areas, offering bus tokens for the garbage. The program was widely successful, encouraging the residents to clean up their neighborhoods. From there the city moved to the idea of separating recyclables in the houses. With TV programs, and school education targeting the children, 70% of the population latched on within the first three months.

A separation station/recycling center opened in 1989. It serves as a training center for unskilled workers and a drug rehabilitation center as well, allowing the workers to find better jobs after they leave. The recycling is self-sufficient and funds many subsidiary programs. Recovered bricks are used for construction for the underprivileged; Styrofoam is used for stuffing in couches, plastic for railroad ties, old tires for fuel and oils—eliminating the most common breeding ground for the dengue mosquito. The success of the programs has promoted individual initiative of recyclers who bypass the city and sell to private companies, lowering Curitiba's needs for equipment and infrastructure. Once more the partnership of the city and private companies makes all these programs self-sufficient.

The prevailing idea of low-income housing in Brazil consists of standardized housing in the outskirts of the city, far from services and jobs. In 1980 Curitiba came through with a new idea: break the standard design and integrate diversity of functions and social classes. The tenants were allowed to individualize their unit by redesigning it, and the areas were allowed mixed use of business and residential. Mayor Cassio Taniguchi devised the idea of placing new housing developments

along the electric power grid, and adding schools, clinics, daycares, and other services in the projected new areas. Concurrently he envisioned ways to stimulate microenterprise. The city offered job training and free training for starting businesses, together with financial assistance, reaching as many as eighteen districts and 800,000 people. The start-up businesses are hosted in the "baracao industrial," a business incubator, in a very large warehouse. Spaces are offered as soon as they are freed by more mature businesses moving out to the next stage.

Like many cities, Curitiba is bordered by floodplains. While wealthier cities in the United States, such as New Orleans and Sacramento, have chosen to build extensive, and expensive-to-maintain levee systems, Curitiba purchased the floodplain and made parks. Initially, in fact, Curitiba was one of the worst cities in Brazil concerning annual floods. Every year thousands of people were affected, with compounding sanitation problems. After the catastrophic flood of 1970, the city devised the creation of parks in the low-lying areas. A newly dug lake replaced 800 houses, whose owners were compensated to move to better areas. Other overflow lakes were excavated to be used in case of floods. The cost to the city for all of these operations is a fifth of the creation of dams and canals, with none of the ecological consequences moving downstream.

New parks have been very creatively devised. A quarry used for industrial waste was restored and turned into a green area with an additional waterfall, lake, and tunnel dug into the mountain. Overall Curitiba boasts thirty parks, most of which were designed to contain floods. Public green space went from an average of 0.5 m²/person in the 1960s to 55 m²/person in the 1990s. As the city lacks funds for maintenance, the parks are kept mowed by sheep. A useful by-product of the beautification of Curitiba has been the retention of tourists for longer periods—from an initial average of one day to three days at present. A 2009 survey showed that 96% of Curitibaans consider themselves happy living in their city.

All of the above examples have in common the boldness of thinking outside of ideologies of the past, and a stretching forward into the boundaries of the future. They free the imagination and call on human ingenuity, creativity, and faith, in short the spirit made manifest.

The Magic of Inclusive Participation at Work

There are at present revolutionary ways to look at vast challenges with the recognition that problems are dynamics of great complexity and that the magic for change lies in bringing all of parties involved and each of our better selves to the table.

The social/cultural/spiritual magician has to completely depart from the stances of the past. Most of political activism knows what is wrong and brings forth with certainty what is right. The same dead certainty can be present in equal degree on two sides of an issue. And we also know that some of this activism is needed and will still be needed. However, a new kind of activism has arisen that wants to spread out. The social magician is someone who is aware of the reality of larger systems in which we are all embedded: hardly anybody is completely guilty, nobody is fully innocent. We form part of systems that don't work and that perpetuate

dysfunction, heartache, illness, and death. So how can we creatively change the system together without imposing a readymade blueprint?

The social artist is a convener, someone who is curious and can accept not knowing the answers beforehand. He trusts human nature and the wisdom present in groups. He knows it's just a matter of changing the dynamics and the conversations. He realizes he doesn't have to force his wisdom into the whole.

When she wants to bring social change, the wizard has to feel empathy for all parts involved. She had better divest herself of all favored ideas and cherished solutions. Just as there is a wisdom in the Self that we can discover all life long, so is there one in organizations, communities, and groups if we create the conditions for it to emerge. Once more this is a stance of transcend and include.

In the scale of the complexity of modern issues, there are some sobering truths to be acknowledged. There are no simple solutions and nobody really understands the whole. To get to a solution we need all perspectives to be present. We need all tensions to be recognized and addressed in productive ways. The magician is too busy creating the conditions for extraordinary conversations and gathering of unusual perspectives to worry for one moment about any predetermined ideological outcome. He values the richness of human perspectives, seeks to create spaces of empathy and comfort; he prizes constructive, unusual, out-of-the-box solutions. He trusts the group conscience and what arises when all feel valued and heard. This is what some have called the "magic in the middle," the "group conscience," or the "sense of the meeting." And there is something much better than all the ideological recipes of the past, the ability to listen to what the future wants of us.

For those who want to practice this new kind of magic, it is a matter of creating the conditions for the group to become the vehicle of larger magic. We can open our mind to truly value all perspectives, indeed actively seek any that are missing. We can completely dispel any fear of conflict, rather look forward to creative dissonance, the real engine of change. We can start to see opportunities where anyone else would see challenges and problems. Needless to say, this is a pursuit that can take an aspiring social artist on a lifelong path.

To return to Harry Potter, the social magic can be cultivated by individuals consciously striving for the spirit, who have larger social aims. Isn't this what the Order of the Phoenix stands for? An open-minded order of the wizards who stand for a life-affirming culture at the antipodes of Voldemort and his Death Eaters. Harry Potter would never have played out his role in the world were it not for the Order and the many who sacrificed themselves for the good: Mad-Eye Moody, Lupin, Tonks, George Weasley, and so on.

The Magic of Gaia

Every now and then amazing stories make the news about ways to regenerate our Earth, only to disappear with little comments, conscience taking, and learning. And yet these are the ones, I would advance, young and older wizards should notice. We have the choice of thinking "It's just a drop in the bucket" and returning to

humdrum existence, or taking stock and asking more questions. How could this happen? What can I learn from it? How could more of this happen? Could I even be part of this? The questions we ask are fateful, and asking good questions truly brings back magic into our lives.

Abu Hawi: Ethiopia Rising

Godify was born in the village of Gerealta in the Tigrai region in the north of Ethiopia in 1971. At the time of famine in which he was born, the parents called him Godify or "worthless" to dissuade the evil spirits from taking him. During his lifetime Tigrai underwent a thirty-year struggle for survival. Abu Hawi played an important part in the rebirth of his region, together with political movements and nonprofit development agencies. His personal course, highlighted in the documentary *Ethiopia Rising*, is indicative of what can be achieved with dedication and love for nature.

At age thirteen Godify survived his parents, and at that time he moved to Abraha Atsbeha, the village of his sister. He felt impelled to change his name into Gabre Mikel, or "servant of [the Archangel] Michael." Already during his childhood, two turning points had radically altered Ethiopia's fate. In 1973 a severe drought was followed by protests around the price of fuel. Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed and the military took power in a coup. This was the rise to power of the infamous Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1977, whose Derg (Committee) submitted Ethiopia to more than two decades of the so-called Red Terror.

Alone in his village Gabre started noticing the spiraling, destructive effect of land degeneration, particularly the impact on erosion, water management, and soil fertility due to the loss of trees. He singlehandedly set himself to protect the village forest from all who would cut down the trees, raising a few enemies in the process. The elders treated him as a rebellious child.

Another force rose in the region in challenge of the Red Terror, the Tigrai's People Liberation Front (TPLF), who saw the need to secure resources for the people in order to avoid a mass exodus. The village was caught in the fight between the Derg and the TPLF. Targeted for his activism, Gabre was accused of being a spy on behalf of the TPLF and confined to a very small cell in which he couldn't lie down to sleep. His sister secured his release and probably his very survival. The military rounded up most of the village inhabitants and dispersed them to neighboring areas or disappeared them, leaving in all ten to twenty families alone in the village.

The effect of the political repression and droughts brought in 1984 the greatest famine the country had witnessed, an event of appalling dimension, abundantly covered in the news. The TPLF created a relief society called REST (Relief Society of Tigrai) delivering relief food and enlisting people for projects of reclamation and self-reliance. From 1986 the TPLF enlisted the Tigrai inhabitants for regeneration efforts that would occupy every able-bodied adult forty days of the year in common projects, the equivalent of a civil service program. To make this possible, women were freed from the tradition that prohibited them from working alongside men. Volunteers even came from abroad.

Gabre took a lead role in energizing his fellow villagers and beyond. One of the major activities was the creation of check dams at intervals along the river beds, to retain water, lessen the effect of torrential rains, and make the water available for irrigation. The government provided the wire mesh for containing the rocks, World Vision brought in concrete, and the rest was done by the villagers' labor. Gabre took on much of this oversight work. The farmers devised other ways of bringing back the forest, such as farmer-managed natural regeneration, which was simply the pruning of volunteer tree species in selecting a single scion and eliminating side branches. Thus the region saw upwards of 900,000 trees planted in the space of four years.

Finally Gabre's work was recognized by the community and in 1988 he was unanimously asked to take on the responsibility for ecological conservation, one year before the Derg would leave the Tigray, three before they were toppled from Ethiopia. In recognition of his untiring activity and contagious enthusiasm for the work, this time it was the people who gave him yet another name, Abu Hawi, or Man of Fire.

Abu Hawi was recognized as an authority in his field in other regions of Ethiopia. He started traveling to other communities, bringing his expertise and harvesting new ideas that he could bring back home. The year 1998 saw another drought and famine. Many thought of leaving the area. Once more the village, under the leadership of Abu Hawi, rallied for massive projects of hillside terracing, working even through the night. Since then the forest covers 40% of the area, and permanent springs have returned. Old fracture lines have been healed; those who accused Abu Hawi are now his friends.

The movement started by the TPLF has by now spread to the whole of Ethiopia and sparked the Green Revolution, which saw a large-scale change, short of miraculous. Millions of hectares were contoured for terracing. Ethiopia underwent an ecological rebirth. And the model spread to neighboring countries.

The Biggest Little Farm

Apricot Lane Farms was started in 2011 as a "traditional foods farm" by John and Molly Chester, a husband and wife team who left their jobs in Los Angeles to become farmers and pursue their dream vision of producing nutrient-rich food in harmony with the environment. Before turning farmers, John was a filmmaker and Molly a private traditional foods chef living in Santa Monica, California.

The Chesters' farm breaks the monotony of a very desolate landscape of monoculture farms to the north of Los Angeles. Nearby lay the remains of Egg City, an intensive chicken operation that housed up to 3.5 million chickens at its height, and miles of raspberries, or lemon and avocado orchards. At present it is a very diversified two-hundred-acre farm, consisting primarily of biodynamically certified avocado and lemon orchards, with many varieties of other stone fruits and a host of animals, including goats, sheep, chickens, ducks, pigs, horses, and highland cattle. The whole is delightfully portrayed in the 2018 award-winning documentary *The Biggest Little Farm*.

When the land was bought, the soil was dead and compacted from so many years of intensive chemical inputs. The consultant who was hired, Allan York, introduced elements of biodynamics and permaculture, and a view of farming centered on the health of the soil and the maximum possible biological diversity. He wanted to lead the Chesters through a seven-year transformation that would completely integrate the farm in the ecosystem and guarantee an optimal synergy, balance, and health. Allan was also a fervent advocate of the importance of animals, though not very clear about how to integrate them. Still, his faith was infectious and the couple followed through.

The movie *The Biggest Little Farm* leads us year by year in what was all but a linear progress. The setbacks and heartaches were part of a journey, but holding on to the dream produced its rewards. To begin, Allan took down fifty-five acres of unhealthy trees and restored the completely dry irrigation pond. The couple then brought in large amounts of trees in wide array of varieties. To complete the whole were animals, the first of them chickens and ducks, soon followed by sheep and pigs.

Allan's vision was that of a great diversity leading to a self-perpetuating and self-regulating farm. To get there a phase of regeneration was needed with emphasis on the health and life of the soil. In fact he saw the need to balance the farm within the whole ecosystem, meaning welcoming the role of all animals, even some feared predators. What was not apparent, or known at the time was that Allan was fighting an aggressive form of cancer.

In the third year a mix of positive and negative factors started playing in. For one, swarms of bees were attracted to the place, and the couple started producing rare and unique fruit varieties for the market. But as the fruits grew in health they started attracting a large population of starlings. On the other hand, the fruit trees grew over a year-round cover-crop, which harboured snails, in fact an aggressive multitude that invaded the trees. Still Molly and John stuck to their original ideals: no poisons. In the third year Allan died, leaving the couple sad at the loss of a friend and dispirited by the lack of his guidance.

The Southern California weather soon became another challenge; Western droughts are often the hardest in California. The lack of rain created challenges for the pond, which grew toxic algae. This is when John started realizing and strengthening the power of observation and pairing challenges with a solutions. The ducks were threatened in their toxic water, but they could be moved to the orchards where they would feed on thousands of snails, offering relief to the trees and enriching the soil underneath. The animals' manure became with the heat the reason for the invasion of flies, but here too, observation led to creativity. The chickens were introduced in the pastures and kept the flies population manageable.

Allan foresaw that each year would get more predictable, though in his absence the Chesters could not necessarily agree. In year four the gophers started becoming a real problem. Having inviting cover crops under the trees, didn't mean that they would not extend their views to the trees themselves, and there was little way to control them without poisons. John invoked the owls by placing plenty of

birdhouses for them, but with no immediate result. On the other hand the thriving egg operation was threatened by the coyotes, in spite of extensive fencing. Why wouldn't the coyotes feel welcome too? And how would they ever know what bounds to respect? John was tested and he killed a coyote in his exasperation, realizing this was clearly not the solution. In addition that year also brought strong wind storms that felled trees and killed animals. It was in fact California's driest year in over 1,200 years, and it highlighted how the farm was dependent on the aquifer for its operations.

On the other hand, year five finally brought an abundance of rain with storms adding up to eighteen inches, causing floods and eroding soils all around the farm. But not in the farm, which showed that Allan's views had paid off. While the coyotes kept killing the chickens, the dreamed-for balance started showing new signs. The owls were coming in numbers and with them the promise of control of the rival bird populations. Holding on to his observation skills, John used one of his shepherd dogs to keep the coyotes away, and the other to keep guard with the chickens. Not finding their way into the coops, the coyotes poured their attention to the orchards where they could find plenty of gophers.

By year seven things had finally arrived at a place of balance. All the animals of the original ecosystem had returned and found a place of contribution. The couple realized they were not alone in farming. Not only did the owls contribute greatly to gopher control but so did the hawks control the starlings. The flywheel had entered in motion. Gopher snakes, weasels, badgers, raccoons, all had become part of a delicate, richly integrated and mutually supportive ecosystem. The farm produced 500,000 pounds of food that year. The soil has become a miracle of life.

Wangari Maathai and the Green Belt Movement

The famous Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai comes from a world where some indigenous tradition still survived. She was born in a small Kenyan village, where she could appreciate the magic of nature. Through the beauty of fairy tales she could still see a nature that spoke to humans, and intuitively she knew that nature's wounds cause wounds in our soul.

She was then exposed to culturally contrasting religious education, and she appreciated the nuns' desire to help the young souls. Through it she entered the world and mindset of science. This landed her in the USA for five and a half years. She not only deepened her understanding of science but imbibed the idea of individual rights and the affirmation of the individual. She fathomed that new values could blend with her older ones.

With a passion that set her on fire, she became the first East African woman with a PhD and taught at the University of Nairobi. Science opened her eyes to the devastations that colonialism, and its continuation under the modern dictatorship of Arap Moi, wrought upon Kenya. She saw the systemic interlinking between monocultures, soil erosion, and degradation; loss of traditional knowledge and diets; and other correlated devastating effects on health and environment. She married and had children but, because of all she had learned, could not conform to the role

that tradition required of her, that of the submissive wife. She started joyfully breaking one taboo, then another.

Speaking to the women in the country, she realized they had lost all traditional knowledge, down to the very basics. She thought that a great revolution could be created if women learned to plant trees anew, and little by little could change the Kenyan landscape. For that to be effective, she gave life to the Green Belt Movement, and devised it in such a way that it would put responsibility first and foremost on women's initiative; no handouts, just instruction and assistance, rewarding effort and results. And she broke yet other taboos: it had not been women's role to plant trees. The women felt empowered and encouraged each other from one village to the next in what was after all a simple and powerful pursuit.

All through this process Wangari entered in the eye of the cyclone. She stood out as an exception, an easy target for the forces of tradition and corruption. She was targeted for not behaving, for not complying with roles and expectations. But she continued to use imagination: for her planting trees was a way to plant new ideas and promote self-respect. She blended traditional values of life in respect with nature with the innovation of promotion of new roles for women and all individuals.

To one so ahead of her times, destiny invariably had to bring fresh trials. She divorced and lost most of her standing and financial support. She fully felt what it was to be like any of her fellow Kenyans. But that meant that now she was going to fully do what she was meant to do.

In 1989 she protested against the destruction of the one and last park in Nairobi. For that she appealed to international conscience. Why were the Western powers promoting something they would never do, say in the UK or the US? She called on international conscience and solidarity. She caught her regime by surprise and organized a joyful resistance. She was defamed and ostracized, standing alone as an example, losing the support of many. The Uhuru Park project of a gigantic skyrise was written off, and that was the first significant victory of the Green Belt Movement on the national stage. Until then the authorities had not worried about women planting trees. They had not understood that it was far more than trees.

Wangari's consciousness kept expanding. She saw the links between all struggles and the power of the imagination to bring them together. She organized the mothers of political prisoners to hold vigils and do hunger strikes at Uhuru Park asking for the freedom of their sons and daughters. She did this in a spirit of celebration of the human spirit. Soon others joined in; among them all the political dissidents that had been cowed down by torture. Another fresh batch of trials followed.

Facing repression, the women stood their ground but were hunted down. Wangari was badly beaten and went into a coma, but her companions kept up the struggle. The few that had remained had taken refuge in a church. What was meant to be a provisional step turned into months, in fact very close to a year. And support kept forming around her. In 1992 Arap Moi was forced to concede free elections, even though he managed to maintain hold on power. And the politicians resorted to their weapon of choice rather than conceding their privileges: fomenting fear and

promoting tribal warfare. By distributing favors to their ethnic base, they instilled fear that rival tribes would lack access to resources. This could only be countered by turning to the tribal leaders and elders and by promoting education toward a national project beyond tribalism. The attempt ushered in a triumph of the imagination. Planting of trees became a symbol of all resistance. When the government wanted to sell out Karura public forest, close to the capital, the protest became a call to plant trees in the endangered area. Finally, Moi was removed from power and Wangari was elected to parliament with 98% of the vote. In an effort of reconciliation, the tree metaphor was used to rally the soldiers who, it was said, should carry a gun in one hand, and a tree on the other, to fight the enemy on one side and environmental degradation on the other.

Here is a small measure of the effect of the Green Belt Movement on the Kenyan landscape. In 2008 it oversaw the planting of 8.3 million trees, several millions in 2009 though a great part were killed by the drought, 4 million in 2010, and close to an astounding 2 billion in 2012.⁴⁹ And planting trees is only the most measurable part of the work, because the rest lies in education, consciousness-raising, and community building.

At her 2004 Nobel Prize address, Maathai wove pictures of great power. For her tree planting was a natural starting point to address basic needs identified by Kenyan women. Setting an attainable goal with recognizable results generated interest and commitment.

She concluded her speech:

Culture plays a central role in the political, economic, and social life of communities. Indeed, culture may be the missing link in the development of Africa. Culture is dynamic and evolves over time, consciously discarding retrogressive traditions, like female genital mutilation, and embracing aspects that are good and useful. ...

As I conclude I reflect on my childhood experience when I would visit a stream next to our home to fetch water for my mother. I would drink water straight from the stream. Playing among the arrowroot leaves I tried in vain to pick up the strands of frogs' eggs, believing they were beads. But every time I put my little fingers under them they would break. Later, I saw thousands of tadpoles: black, energetic, and wriggling through the clear water against the background of the brown earth. This is the world I inherited from my parents.

Today, over fifty years later, the stream has dried up, women walk long distances for water, which is not always clean, and children will never know what they have lost. The challenge is to restore the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.

⁴⁹ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Belt_Movement#Projects

Nature can be seen as a source to be exploited or as a dynamic, vital system of elaborate and delicate balances. But why stop there? Nature can also be seen as a plethora of spiritual beings of all sorts, who are yearning to be seen, understood, communicated to, and asked for help. Traditional cultures, the Kenyan like any other, have always known it. In this lies a whole new line of magic for wizards to come.

In Wangari Maathai we see the three kinds of magic added to each other and interwoven. It is because she could live with a continuously evolving image of Self that she managed to reach out and bridge all seeming contradictions; she continuously transcended and included. When needed, embracing her higher Self helped her serenely face marginalization and still hold on to what has permanent value.

The worlds of nature and culture are inextricably linked as Wangari Maathai understood. Imagination can create a bridge between the two. It was a very lively imagination that allowed Wangari to appreciate what traditional culture could bring and where its limitations lay; to learn from science, while still being able to speak common sense to the Kenyan women; to see the devastation that America and the West have wrought upon her native land, and yet recognize what the best of American culture can offer and export. But what is imagination, other than the fruit of the spirit? From the spirit it springs forth and to the spirit it returns us.

The New Phoenix

Let us close our reflections about this beloved modern classic with the last, most gripping, beautiful, and touching chapters of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, those that describe the death of Harry Potter at the hands of the worst possible wizard, and his rebirth and triumph. These are the chapters that show Harry's true magic, the power of his love that Dumbledore recognizes over and over again.

Once before did Harry know the full fury of the Dark Lord. It was at Godric's Hollow that, while tied to a tombstone, Voldemort had inflicted the Cruciatus and Imperius Curses on Harry without managing to bend his will. Then he had tried the *Avada Kedavra* Killing Curse, and Harry was spared through the help of the dead, and mostly his parents sustaining his spirit and keeping the Death Eaters at bay.

Harry has now earned certainty about his Self. He stands secure without family or spiritual masters, with just his two friends. He is content with who he is, one with his mission. He has served his fellow students, accepted to serve the world, extended his concern to house-elves and goblins alike, even to some Death Eaters. He has known the full power of the young, arrogant Snape and that of the relentless Voldemort.

Now Harry has gone a step further. He has practiced the Imperius and Cruciatus Curses himself. Nothing is left to gain from Voldemort except the *Avada Kedavra* curse. How could he possibly use this last curse without staining his soul beyond repair? Well, quite simply by accepting it in such a way that he removes from it all power.

In setting out for the quest, Harry has to put everything personal on hold; his love for Ginny puts her at risk, or him in the condition of having to choose between personal happiness or answering the call of his personal mission. And there is another bind, or rather a necessary step of growth: Harry has depended on Dumbledore first as a surrogate father, which is only normal for a youth his age, then has developed the love for the spiritual master. The loss has left a tremendous hole in his soul, which at turns is filled with sadness, anger, or doubt. Can Harry take the next step? From accepting Dumbledore as a master to accepting him as a beacon, a highly developed individual, and yet still completely human? Harry struggles in his quest because he wants to make sure Dumbledore has not cheated him, until he can see both the headmaster's dimension of a spiritual teacher and his humanity retraced in his biography.

Harry has to wander the wilderness in pursuit of what seems sheer impossibility: destroy the Horcruxes and hope that everybody else will help him in doing what he cannot do—e.g., killing Nagini—plus trust that the timing will also work in his favor. In other words, completely relinquish control. But that is not enough. Harry must say yes to the call of his destiny, which includes his own death. He has to discover and reach for the certainty of his immortality and be able to let go of the Resurrection Stone. In so doing he fulfills the prophecy of his parents' headstone inscription, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And he has to cleanse himself of the hatred for Voldemort to the point that he can face him willingly and unarmed. He will not reach for the wand, even when it is in his power. Harry dies and Voldemort unintentionally destroys the portion of Harry's soul that was bound to his enemy ever since the attempted murder of the baby.

Through his utmost renunciation, Harry can face the choice of coming back and this time fight for Voldemort's death. It's not a coincidence that Harry can turn to Voldemort at the height of the next decisive confrontation and say "It's your one last chance, it's all you got left. ... I've seen what you'll be otherwise. ... Be a man ... try ... Try for some remorse." Harry has seen in the otherworldly King's Cross Station the fate of Voldemort, a fate that lay beyond any possible help, one that can rightfully inspire compassion. He has learned from his master, Dumbledore, that everyone deserves a second chance. He knows he cannot help Voldemort if the latter doesn't initiate the change from within.

Harry has been the hope of the Order of the Phoenix. They have fought Voldemort by protecting Harry's life at all costs. Harry has understood it. Before he took refuge in the Order's safe house, he had created Dumbledore's Army. Harry had first accepted to be called "Dumbledore's man" with pride. Before coming to Hogwarts's rescue, he indicates to Aberforth that he is completely devoted to the Order of the Phoenix. In the last confrontation with Voldemort, doesn't Harry himself embody the phoenix that dies and is reborn? And Voldemort doesn't realize what part he plays in making this possible.

Harry's ultimate sacrifice brings the complete change, including his only possible survival. Harry has the daring of hope against all odds, just like another character that is very different from him, especially in age, and yet in some magic way, very similar. It is the one who claims: "Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the

world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Conclusions: The Path of Modern Magicians

What does Harry Potter teach to any of us aspiring wizards? What do his adventures say about the path we need to tread? The young wizard stands in the lines of the fiction as we do today in the threads of real life. The choices in these times are imperative; we are placed in front of an epochal divider, with hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people being tossed into situations of seemingly no return. Think of how much of the culture of death all youth are imbibing daily. Think of the dire situations of trauma that all of humanity is facing, from war zones and destruction that include torture, political oppression, systematic intimidation, or induction of child soldiers, to widespread hyper-sexualization and exploitation of women, to domestic and sexual abuse, without mentioning the millions of refugees and displaced populations worldwide.

Harry Potter himself knows what it means not to belong. For all his childhood he faces not being accepted for who he is. The first book relates this directly with the dilemma of not knowing his parents, not even glimpses of their true biographies. Then a door opens through which he can aspire to his true Self even before he knows himself in the conventional sense of the word. Later a tenuous but deceptive connection opens up with his parents through the mirror of Erised.

The world of the wizards shows the teenager that he belongs to something larger, but that is hardly a consolation. His task is to accept a possibility of something more without using it for his own personal ambition, to be a Gryffindor even when he has the strength and the means to tilt the scales toward the shadows of Slytherin. He could take all sorts of shortcuts to fill an inner void. Instead he needs the strength to live in that void without recourse to personal self-seeking and gratifying. The road to being a true wizard is definitely not easy.

With the choice to join the wizarding world comes the recognition of a painful past, the tapestry of the encounter of the light of his parent's world with the darkness that Voldemort has woven in it. And the darkness threatens his very survival. Even his life as a student is an active apprenticeship into life's trials. He learns as much, or more, from the adventures into which he is thrust than from the classroom. He does not know the comfortable distance that comes from book learning. And he soon has to learn to stand on his own, without the comfort of his peers' approval; few can understand and accept that Harry has the traits of a Slytherin and a disquieting kinship with the Dark Lord. As Harry looks for traces of his own past he meets with the past of Lord Voldemort and his alter Tom Riddle. He risks death and is rescued by the Phoenix, a symbol of his true self. Standing on our own, open to misunderstanding and criticism is probably the lot of all truly aspiring wizards.

The ordeal deepens in the third book where Potter comes to see the darkness in his parents and in his friends. It is noteworthy to point out that Sirius is part of the Black family of dark magicians, and appears as a black dog, and Lupin owes his name to the wolf. Harry recognizes everything that still needs transformation all

around him. He has an inkling that it is not easy to recognize the truth about facts and the character of people.

As Harry's tasks continue and deepen, he has to face being seen as an impostor himself. Why is he the fourth in a tournament that is really meant for three? As he meets ostracism and condemnation, he has the opportunity to be either an innovator or a destructor. The wizard has to be able to stand completely on his own, reviled by everybody around him and hunted down by Voldemort, before new avenues appear for him and for the people around him. Fortunately he has the support of Dumbledore, Hermione, Ron, and others. In the tournament Harry faces tasks of growing complexity and learns to trust his skills and instincts while preserving his integrity. He is called to summon in the moment his inner response from whatever challenge arises. What skills he has built up protect him in his first large ordeal against the newly re-embodied Voldemort.

Finally a new door opens, that of the Order of the Phoenix. Harry realizes he belongs to something else, something larger beyond his own individuality. He can be part of a larger purpose, one of service to his fellow human beings. Moreover, the Order is there to protect him and assure the completion of the task. Now he has the opportunity to be more fully himself and part of a larger stage in which Voldemort is fought. He realizes to what extent the battle that is taking place out in the world is raging in his soul. Voldemort is literally occupying his thoughts and feelings, to the extent that Harry can experience rage against Dumbledore, the one who supports him unconditionally. Ultimately tragedy strikes and Harry's godfather dies. The young wizard feels alone and partly responsible. After all, Dumbledore and Hermione warned him of the likelihood of Voldemort using him as a tool. Harry risks losing himself in guilt and regret. What we see through Harry's ordeals is that any aspiring wizard has to forego the illusion of being an external spectator with a quick fix, something that can be learned from a book. What she sees all around in the world is what the magician will experience in her soul, and she will not be spared.

As the odyssey nears its completion, Harry, as do all aspiring magicians, soon has to realize that nothing is cut and dry when we cross the threshold to the other side of reality. Nobody is all of one cloth—neither his parents, nor Dumbledore, nor ultimately Harry himself. Harry has to learn so much of his own biography and destiny from Snape. He has to acknowledge how much he owes to the one he has always believed a foe. He recognizes his commonality with the good, the bad, and everything in between. Not surprisingly, while Snape fights to protect him, Harry is fascinated by the experiments of the Half-Blood Prince and has to fight that darkness within himself. The task of the magician offers no quick shortcuts. Harry and all aspiring magicians have to inwardly experience with intensity the battles that humanity is facing outwardly. He has to make a place in his soul for deep discomfort and gain the power to transform and redeem.

In the search for the Horcruxes Harry can recognize how evil affects so many in such different ways. He has to know the whole world of Voldemort and the depths of his own soul. He has to recognize his commonality with the Dark Lord himself in order to shed the last of the darkness he shares with him. Harry is able to both see

what stands lowest and what is highest. He is tempted to use the Dark Lord's tools and does so on a couple of occasions. Only thus can he make a truly informed choice and free his fellow magicians and Muggles from the weight of Lord Voldemort's dark plans to subjugate all of humankind. Harry's task becomes global. There is no more difference between wizards and Muggles in what Potter tries to achieve; he is there to serve and rescue everybody. What he ultimately accomplishes changes the fate of the world. Inner transformation has brought about ultimate change in the world. Though we play minor roles as magicians, we can use Harry Potter's example on the path of self and world transformation.

Appendix: The Growth of a Remarkable Teenager

Not a small part of the surprise of the success of the Harry Potter story is that it places center stage a batch of teenager heroes who grapple with things most adults would not want to know about. Likewise, the topics that philosophy or metaphysics treat in colleges and universities are here meant for youths and young adults, though from an artistic angle, of course. That is how much our world has changed. I've heard some decry this state of affairs, but want it or not, many of the painful topics the Harry Potter saga addresses prematurely reach youths to the point of robbing them of their innocence and what should be a time of carefreeness.

Two themes continuously intertwine in J.K. Rowling's volumes, not exactly the usual stuff of blockbusters: death and evil, friendship and sacrifice, instead of say, fame, sex, power, glamor. Sacrifice, up to the ultimate sacrifice, saturates the pages of this bestseller. Everything that our time consciously rejects, it subconsciously welcomes here with a vengeance.

What has been compiled below is not a summary of the book plots. They are just key events that need to be considered in the evolution of the character of Harry Potter, and threads that connect one book to the other, many of which could easily be overlooked. The highlights below will serve the purpose of making the next chapters more understandable.

The events will be offered with the full knowledge of what is known from the seven books, not just from the limited angle of each book. Therefore, parentheses will be offered, such as backgrounds of the events that the characters could not have known in the early stages of the story. This is also offered as a reminder for those who have read the books and forgotten, or as a pointer for those who may want to read them in the future.

Book 1: Harry between Slytherin and Gryffindor

After his parents' death, Harry is placed under the care of Dumbledore and Hagrid, and Professor Minerva McGonagall to a minor extent. Dumbledore devises for Harry to be taken in by his aunt Petunia, and places a protection charm on all of them, as long as Harry calls that place his home. Just before turning eleven Harry receives the invitation to attend Hogwarts. On the way to Hogwarts he finds that he is known by other wizards as the "boy who lived," meaning who survived Voldemort's curse. Harry doesn't know that he also has the unspoken support of Snape.

Even before getting to Hogwarts Harry shows some signs of his connection to Voldemort. The first is the event at the zoo, in which on the occasion of Dudley's birthday, Harry is able to communicate to a boa constrictor and unwittingly help its release from the cage. In Diagon Alley (a street in London hidden by magic) Harry is brought to the store of Mr. Ollivander who looks for Harry's appropriate wand. The wandmaker is not a little surprised that the wand that chooses Harry is one of holly with a core of phoenix feather. The only other one he knows containing

feathers from the same phoenix belongs to Voldemort, the same one the wizard used in the attempt to kill baby Potter.

On the first day at Hogwarts the Sorting Hat seduces Harry with the possibility of joining Slytherin (one of the four houses into which students are divided). The hat discerns: "Difficult. Very difficult. Plenty of courage, I see. Not a bad mind either. There's a talent, oh my goodness, yes, and a nice thirst to prove yourself, now that's interesting. ... So where should I put you?" To Harry imploring "Not Slytherin" the hat continues "Not Slytherin? ... Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that. Not Slytherin—no? Well, if you're sure—better be Gryffindor!"

In short time Harry is unintentionally led to a forbidden area of the Hogwarts castle and its three-headed dog by the Slytherin Draco Malfoy, who has challenged him to a duel. Beyond this area lay the Sorcerer's Stone. On Christmas Day Harry receives, anonymously, an Invisibility Cloak, an important gift in the attempt of finding the Sorcerer's Stone. With it comes a note: "Just in case."

Voldemort has possessed Quirrell's soul, the first of a string of challenged Defense Against the Dark Arts teachers. It is Quirrell who lets a troll into the castle, which Harry and Ron defeat in their attempt to rescue Hermione. Soon after this, Harry, Ron, and Hermione discover that Professor Snape has been bitten on the leg and now limps. Overhearing a conversation of Snape with caretaker Argus Filch, Harry understands that this happened while he was trying to get past the three-headed dog that guards access to the Sorcerer's Stone. Snape must already be suspicious of Quirrell's role and his allegiance to the Dark Lord at this point, but this renders Snape all the more suspect to Harry's eyes.

Returning to the forbidden area, Harry meets the Mirror of Erised, which plays a part in finding the Sorcerer's Stone. He sees his parents and some ten other people in total, and subsequently longs to return to the mirror. He resists the temptation, however, after the promptings of Dumbledore, who indicates that the mirror will be moved the following day.

Later Harry overhears a conversation in the Forbidden Forest in which Snape calls to cause Quirrell, which Harry again misinterprets. Snape is questioning Quirrell's allegiance to the Dark Lord and concludes the conversation thus: "We'll have another little chat soon, when you've had time to think things over and decided where your loyalties lie." (Chapter 13) Another thread of this scheming emerges indirectly to Harry's eavesdropping on what seems to be Quirrell speaking to an inner voice in a classroom: "'No—no—not again, please'— ... It sounded as though someone was threatening him. Harry moved closer. 'All right—all right—' he heard Quirrell sob." Harry sees his teacher come out of the classroom, straightening his turban, on the verge of crying. (Chapter 15)

Initially led into the forest by Hagrid, Harry and Malfoy follow the tracks of a dead unicorn's blood. Harry sees, frozen with fear, a hooded figure drinking the blood of the freshly killed unicorn, and is rescued by the centaur Firenze, who explains: "It is a monstrous thing, to slay a unicorn. 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're an inch from death, but at a terrible price. You have slain something pure and defenseless to save yourself, and you will have but a half-life, a cursed life, from the moment the blood touches your lips." (Chapter 15) He understands that the cloaked figure is Voldemort, acting through Quirrell, wanting to preserve his life a little longer until he can lay his hands on the Sorcerer's Stone. In Chapter 17 Voldemort explains the matter thus: "Unicorn blood has strengthened me, these past weeks. ... you saw faithful Quirrell drinking it for me in the forest" (Chapter 17)

After getting past the three-headed dog, the three companions at turn must exercise their skills and gifts to overcome three tests in their search for the Sorcerer's Stone. First Hermione rescues Harry and Ron from a menacing giant plant that wraps its tendrils around them. They next come to a large locked door in a room that is full of flying objects, which turn out to be winged keys. It is Harry who recognizes the right key thanks to his Quidditch flying skills. Now it is Ron's wits that are tested when the companions must play in a live and violent chess game in which they each are chess pieces on a wide board. Ron leads them in move after move, but in order to defeat the opponent he has to let the queen capture and beat him up. Harry proceeds from there to the room of the Sorcerer's Stone, where he finds the Mirror of Erised.

Harry finds himself in front of the mirror in the presence of Quirrell. When asked to say what he sees, Harry pretends he has just won the House Cup for Gryffindor. Voldemort, who inhabits Quirrell's body, knows Harry is lying and asks Quirrell to unwrap his turban. Voldemort's face speaks to Harry from the back of Quirrell's head.

Harry resists all of Voldemort's entreaties to give him the stone, which Harry not only saw, but retrieved from the mirror. Voldemort knows it is in Harry's pocket. He tells Harry to join him rather than resist and be killed like his parents, but Harry refuses. Under the Dark Lord's orders, Quirrell tries to seize Harry, but his hands are burned every time he tries. Realizing that this is his only chance, Harry grabs Quirrell's head. This causes Quirrell burning pain, but it also activates the pain in Harry's scar. As the struggle intensifies, Harry feels himself losing hold of Quirrell and falling. Before passing out, Harry hears someone calling his name (possibly Dumbledore) and fathoms he sees what looks like a Snitch (a golden ball in Quidditch), but isn't quite sure (Chapter 17).⁵¹

Harry has been saved by Dumbledore in the nick of time and awakens in the infirmary in his presence. Dumbledore reveals he was the one gifting him his parents' Invisibility Cloak at Christmas. He explains that two things played in Harry's favor in the confrontation he survived. The first was that Harry did not seek the stone for

⁵¹ In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, the Golden Snitch is again associated with the Sorcerer's Stone, which it encases. The Sorcerer's Stone has in fact become the Resurrection Stone.

power. Thus he appeared in the mirror just as himself. The second was the protection of his mother's love in his blood. To Quirrell/Voldemort this burned like fire. He then adds something like a theme for the next books. Snape hated James Potter, a little in a similar way that Draco hates Harry. And he concludes that Nicolas Flamel, the Sorcerer's Stone maker, and himself have decided to get rid of the stone, which was not such a good idea after all.

Book 2: Harry between Basilisk and Phoenix

The Chamber of Secrets, at the center of the second book, was the work of Salazar Slytherin who wanted to exclude Muggle-born from the world of wizardry. The basilisk monster was brought to existence to exterminate all non-pureblood wizards. Fifty years earlier a student had been killed in the chamber.

The theme of Harry's belonging to Slytherin house continues in *The Chamber of Secrets*. Harry hears what he thinks is Voldemort's voice while in Professor Lockhart's office, and a second time in the presence of the ghost Moaning Myrtle in the water in the bathrooms.

When Lockhart, the new teacher of Defense Against the Dark Arts, heads a dueling club, Harry joins it and is matched up with Draco. The Slytherin boy produces a fierce black snake out of his wand, which accidentally darts toward a fellow student. Harry finds he can talk to the serpent, appease it, and stop it in its tracks. He doesn't realize until he's told that he has spoken in Parseltongue—the snake speech known to Salazar Slytherin—and has thus terrified his fellow students who believe he is Slytherin's heir.

The worried Harry visits Dumbledore. While he is waiting for the wizard, he spies the Sorting Hat and puts it on. Harry, exasperated, hears confirmation that he would be a great Slytherin. When he takes off the hat, he sees for the first time Fawkes, and witnesses the death and rebirth of the phoenix that is so important to Dumbledore and his Order.

Harry and Ron retrieve a diary with the name T. M. Riddle written on the first page in a bathroom haunted by the ghost Moaning Myrtle. It has been left there by Ron's sister Ginny to whom it was given surreptitiously by Lucius Malfoy when she purchased books for the school year at Flourish and Blotts. The diary is blank, but Harry discovers that it will write answers to what Harry himself writes in as comments or questions. He thus begins to dialogue with Tom Riddle, the younger version of Lord Voldemort. From it he receives the distorted story of how Riddle was rewarded for discovering the person who had introduced the monster in the Chamber of Secrets. While Tom himself had done the deed, he had framed Hagrid with an unrelated, coincidental matter. Hagrid, however, never lost the trust of Dumbledore.

From Harry the diary is stolen back by Ginny, who initiates her own conversations with Tom Riddle, entrusting her secrets and her love for Harry. Tom can manipulate her will to set the stage for all subsequent events. Through Ginny's unwitting collaboration a series of events follows. At first Hermione and a Ravenclaw house

prefect named Penelope Clearwater are found petrified, with a small hand mirror lying next to them.

Harry reaches two important discoveries. First that the person killed by the basilisk could be Moaning Myrtle. Visiting the frozen Hermione in the school hospital, Harry and Ron recognize a piece of paper clutched in Hermione's hand, which offers basic information about the basilisk. This creature lives for hundreds of years, speaks in Parseltongue, kills with its stare, is the enemy of spiders, and is killed by the crow of a rooster.

Completely under Tom's sway, Ginny has been taken into the Chamber of Secrets. Harry and Ron enlist the help of a very reluctant Professor Lockhart. Talking to Myrtle, Harry deduces her death was caused by the basilisk's gaze. The three make their way to the Chamber of Secrets, and ultimately Harry takes the last steps alone and sees there an unconscious Ginny. Soon after enters Tom Riddle, brought back to life as a living memory by Ginny's continued correspondence and yearning; he has literally drained Ginny of her life. Tom captures Harry's wand, then reveals that Tom Marvolo Riddle, his original name, spells out "I am Lord Voldemort" with a simple rearranging of the letters.

Harry declares faithfulness to Dumbledore and is soon reached by the phoenix Fawkes who also carries the Sorting Hat. Tom unleashes the basilisk. The first one to fight it is Fawkes, who blinds the basilisk, thus reducing the risks to Harry's life. Putting on the Sorting Hat once more, Harry extracts the sword of Gryffindor, which helps him fight the formidable foe. The hat that has warned Harry of his Slytherin tendencies is here rescuing him from the Slytherin creation, the basilisk.

Harry is only partly successful. In the slaying of the monster he has been wounded by one of its fangs. Fawkes now helps him twice. First he heals the wound with the power of his tears, then he thrusts Tom's diary within Harry's reach so that Harry is inspired to thrust the basilisk fang through its pages, causing Tom to scream in agony and to retreat. The phoenix pulls Harry, Ron, and Lockhart to the light of day. Later Dumbledore explains that Harry received Fawkes's help because he remained faithful to his headmaster.

Book 3: Harry, Sirius, and Lupin

At a Quidditch game Harry, in pursuit of the Snitch, spies a large black dog against the bleachers; the next moment he looks down to see hundreds of dementors on the edges of the field. Harry faints. The black dog, which has already appeared a few times, is the Animagus form of Sirius, who wants to stand watch over Harry. To fight back the dementors, Harry trains for some time with Professor Lupin at perfecting the Expecto Patronum spell. After catching the Snitch in another game, and helping his team win the Quidditch Cup, Harry realizes he now has the happy memory with which to forge a very strong Patronus.

At Hagrid's place Hermione accidentally discovers Scabbers, Ron's pet rat, who went missing and caused conflicts between the two, because Hermione's cat Crookshanks often pursued him. Scabbers refuses to hold still in Ron's hands. While this is happening Hagrid has to face the coming execution of his hippogriff

Buckbeak, decision reached by the Ministry of Magic at the instigation of the Malfoys, father and son.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione flee from Hagrid's cabin under Harry's Invisibility Cloak. Scabbers will not stay still once he sees Crookshanks coming out of the Forbidden Forest. He is followed by the black dog/Sirius, which manages to drag Ron away into the forest and down under the Whomping Willow. The hidden passage leads them into the Shrieking Shack near Hogsmeade village, where they find Ron, Crookshanks, and Sirius Black, who has transformed back from the black dog form. Black disarms Harry and Hermione, but Harry, moved by the rage toward the one whom he sees as his parent's betrayer, subjugates Black.

Lupin, who soon arrives, has discovered that Scabbers is the Animagus form of an old common friend, Peter Pettigrew. Black is furious at Peter, who has passed himself as the victim of Sirius and shifted on him the blame of the Potter's betrayal to Voldemort and a massacre that involved the death of many Muggles. We are told the story of the four friends and Animagi—wizards who have learned how to turn themselves into animal forms. Lupin, who had been turned into a werewolf by the bite of the werewolf Fenrir Greyback, was allowed to remain at Hogwarts and, during the full moon, retire to the Shrieking Shack. Lupin's friends—James Potter, Sirius Black, and Peter Pettigrew—became Animagi to assume animal form when Lupin turned werewolf, thus keeping him company without exposing themselves to danger. Snape, who has a deeply rooted grudge against Sirius Black and James Potter, dating back to their school days, arrives with the goal of capturing Black. Harry, Ron, and Hermione simultaneously stun Snape unconscious.

Sirius reverses Scabbers's form into that of Peter Pettigrew. He explains that it was Pettigrew who gave away the Potters to Voldemort and was able to convince people that Black was the traitor. Lupin and Black are about to kill Peter, but Harry stops them by reminding them that his father wouldn't have wanted them to turn murderers.

As the group heads back to the castle, the rising full moon calls Lupin to turn into a werewolf. Black turns into his dog form to protect the others from Lupin, but is badly injured. Pettigrew escapes and Lupin flees, as the dementors arrive intent on attacking Black. Harry tries to produce a Patronus but seems unsuccessful. He perceives a figure in the distance, a powerful stag-shaped Patronus, that scatters the dementors, believing it is his father, or father's spirit, who produced it. He then is attacked by the dementors and passes out. Black is captured and taken to the castle where the dementors intend to suck out his soul.

Harry awakens to hear that Cornelius Fudge is bent on entrusting Black to the dementors. Harry and Hermione explain what they saw and heard to Dumbledore, who believes them. He tells them that this cannot be proven, nor Black saved, but he drops the hint that they need more time to save two lives that night.

Hermione uses her Time-Turner to return with Harry to the Forbidden Forest, back in time to the moments preceding the execution of the hippogriff. The two manage to free Buckbeak from his chain. Harry relives the scene of the Patronus. He

realizes that the stag was his father's Patronus but it was he who had conjured it earlier on. He conjures the Patronus anew, saving Black's life and his own. Father and son gaze at each other before the shape disappears. Dumbledore congratulates Harry for sparing Pettigrew and explains that it is no coincidence that his Patronus takes the shape of the stag, his father's Animagus form.

Book 4: Harry, Dumbledore, and Barty Crouch Jr.

Fifty years earlier in the story, soon after the opening of the Chamber of Secrets and the death of Moaning Myrtle, Voldemort killed the members of the Riddle family. At the time of the present events Frank Bryce, the caretaker of the family's estate, is killed, but not before overhearing that Voldemort wants to wait until the end of the Quidditch World Cup to capture Harry Potter. Harry is able to see this from Voldemort's perspective because of the mental bond formed between them when the infant Harry survived Voldemort's curse.

At the Quidditch World Cup Barty Crouch Jr, Death Eater on the run, is present though hidden under an Invisibility Cloak. He steals Harry's wand and sets the Dark Mark sign in the sky. Muggles have been captured and submitted to abuse by the Death Eaters, and Harry and friends find themselves under attack. Barty Crouch Sr turns his suspicion on Harry since his wand was used to conjure the Dark Mark and has been found in possession of Winky, Crouch's own house-elf.

At Hogwarts the Triwizard Tournament is announced, which will involve the champions of the three most prestigious schools of wizardry: Hogwarts, Beauxbatons, and Durmstrang. On the other hand Dumbledore agrees with Professor Mad-Eye Moody that it is opportune to prepare the students against the three unforgivable curses, which Voldemort and the Death Eaters use: the Imperius Curse, which puts the cursed under the control of the magician; the Cruciatus Curse, which causes terrible pain; and *Avada Kedavra*, or the Killing Curse. In the Defense against the Dark Arts classes Harry learns to resist the Imperius Curse.

The would-be champions have to enter their names in the Goblet of Fire if they want to participate in the tournament and represent their respective schools. The Goblet chooses Cedric Diggory from Hufflepuff house for Hogwarts, Fleur Delacour for Beauxbatons, and Viktor Krum for Durmstrang. To everybody's dismay and to Harry's complete surprise—since he did not enter his name, being underage—the goblet also produces Potter's name. The goblet's pronouncement is unappealable. Only a strong spell could have altered the normal course of selection.

Harry, like Fleur and Krum, is tipped off for the first task. He knows he will have to face a dragon. Knowing that Cedric stands at a disadvantage from the three others, he decides to share what he knows of the task ahead. Harry absolves himself admirably of the task, in fact better than his rivals, retrieving a golden egg that is guarded by the Hungarian Horntail dragon.

Harry faces a much deeper challenge with the second task; his only indication to open the egg that he has won from the dragon, which does not turn to be an easy assignment. He is given a clue by the grateful Cedric, to open the egg while bathing in the prefects' bathroom, and by Moaning Myrtle to do so while underwater.

From what he hears underwater he deduces that he must reclaim something from the merpeople in the lake. He is finally helped by house-elf Dobby, who has eavesdropped that the use of the plant gillyweed can help transform the body and adapt it to the water conditions.

Harry fulfils the task of freeing Ron, made captive by the merpeople. He also frees Fleur's sister, since Fleur shows no sign of arriving, and is therefore delayed in his task even though he was the first on the scene. Only the recognition by the merpeople of Harry's considerate choice gains him extra points from the tournament's judges.

In Dumbledore's office Harry discovers the so-called Pensieve, a magical basin to hold and retrieve memories. He falls with his consciousness into it and is engrossed in Dumbledore's memories of the trials involving Durmstrang headmaster Igor Karkaroff and Barty Crouch Jr. The first one absolves himself by giving names to the prosecutors; the second one is accused of submitting Frank and Alice Longbottom to the Cruciatus Curse and sent to Azkaban for a lifetime. He also overhears a dialogue between Karkaroff and Snape, both of them ex-Death Eaters. Karkaroff is afraid by the appearance of something in his upper arm. It is the Dark Mark symbol that connects him to Voldemort and that signals the Dark Lord's approach. In answer to questions Harry has about his dreams and what he has gleaned in the Pensieve, Dumbledore lets him know that his visions are probably true and that Voldemort is rising. Much to Harry's surprise, Dumbledore stands unconditionally behind Snape.

The third trial, that of the maze, is tainted by the actions of the false Moody, Barty Crouch. Harry sees Krum perform a Cruciatus Curse on Cedric—under the instigations of Professor Moody, who is actually Barty Crouch Jr and has put an Imperius Curse on Krum. Harry runs to Cedric's rescue, while Fleur has abandoned the test. In a confrontation with a giant spider, Harry falls and wounds his leg. Cedric and Harry, realizing how much they owe each other for the tests, decide to tie for first place by grabbing the handles of the Triwizard Cup simultaneously.

The cup has been turned into a Portkey by Barty, and Harry and Cedric find themselves in Godric's Hollow, the place where both the Potter and Dumbledore families used to live. Cedric is immediately killed by Pettigrew, who also stuns Harry and ties him to Tom Riddle Sr's tombstone.

Pettigrew initiates a gruesome ritual in which he first lights a fire under a cauldron full of water, then drops the living content of a bundle, which contained the monstrous form of a child, "hairless and scaly-looking, a dark, raw, reddish black," the present, unviable physical form of Lord Voldemort. To this he adds his own right hand, which he slices off at the moment; a bone from the skeleton of Voldemort's father in the grave below; and blood from Harry's arm. From the brew arises the new form of Lord Voldemort.

Voldemort summons his horde of Death Eaters and announces his plans for world dominion. He indicates that it is through the effort of one of his most faithful that Harry has been brought in their presence. He is referring to the fake Moody/Barty

Crouch Jr, without naming him. The Dark Lord repeats the steps that have brought him back to life and the present power, and shows he is aware of the power of Harry's blood in which resides the love of Lily Potter for her son. He then inflicts the Cruciatus Curse on Harry, hoping to bend him to his will. Harry refuses to submit. Voldemort frees him and offers him his wand back to confront each other in single combat.

The Dark Lord places another Cruciatus Curse on Harry, then an Imperius Curse to oblige him to ask for mercy. Harry, who has managed to resist this curse before, is aware there is little he can do and opposes Voldemort's *Avada Kedavra* with a weak *Expelliarmus* charm to disarm him of his wand. To his surprise the two wands hold each other in check, until Harry hears the beautiful sound of Fawkes, entreating him not to lose the connection.

Something unexpected happens when the bead of light, that Harry's wand conjures and sends forward, touches Voldemort's wand. From the tip of the Dark Lord's wand emerge the recent victims of his curses in the reverse time sequence of their occurrence: first Cedric, then Frank Bryce, then Bertha Jorkins, and lastly Harry's parents, all closing in on Voldemort. The dead offer Harry support. His parents tell him they will hold back the Death Eaters until Harry has time to break the connection, touch the Portkey, and take Cedric's body back to Hogwarts. Harry finds himself back at the school together with the body of Cedric. He has returned, but with a wounded leg.

Back at Hogwarts, Harry is misled by the fake Moody in the last of Crouch's attempt to wrest information from Harry about the Dark Lord. He then reveals that he is the inside supporter that Voldemort has been speaking about. He was the one who placed Harry's name into the Goblet of Fire, and who fired the Dark Mark at the Quidditch World Cup, lastly the one who turned the Triwizard Cup into a Portkey. He also made sure that Harry knew, through others, the nature of the trials, the presence of the dragons in the first, the use of gillyweed in the second. He attacked Harry's rivals in the third.

Fortunately for Harry, Dumbledore breaks into the scene and neutralizes Barty Jr. Snape brings in some Veritaserum, a truth-telling potion, to oblige Barty to tell the rest of the story. It turns out Barty has neutralized and rendered captive the real Moody and continuously drank Polyjuice Potion to maintain Moody's appearance. This revelation leads Dumbledore to free Moody from his captivity in a magic trunk, held in the room.

The false Moody's appearance fades and Crouch's semblance now returns. We also find out that he was freed from Azkaban, and was present but hidden at the Quidditch World Cup, under an Invisibility Cloak under the care of the house-elf Winky. It was Barty who stole Harry's wand and fired the Dark Mark. Voldemort devised the idea of Barty assuming the form of Mad-Eye Moody, in order to teach Defense of the Dark Arts at Hogwarts. And Barty later killed his own father, on the grounds of Hogwarts.

Now Dumbledore reveals to Harry how he was able to fight against Voldemort's wand. Voldemort's and Harry's wands kept each other in check because both had a core of phoenix feather. Once the wands connected, Harry's forced the other to repeat the last spells in the reverse order of their occurrence. This was what summoned the departed souls and the Potters. While Dumbledore explains this, Fawkes has rested on Harry's shoulder and his tears bring healing to the wounded leg.

Book 5: Harry, the Order of the Phoenix, and Voldemort's Death Eaters

When the book begins Harry and Dudley find themselves under attack by dementors in their Muggle neighborhood. Harry finds himself obliged to use magic, even though it is against magical law for an underage wizard to do so, in order to save himself and his cousin.

Harry is notified by various owls of the punitive measures that the Ministry of Magic intends to take, and of the summons to which he needs to present himself. At home Harry is introduced to a group of nine wizards: Mad-Eye Moody, Professor Lupin, Nymphadora Tonks, Kingsley Shacklebolt, Elphias Doge, Dedalus Diggle, Emmeline Vance, Sturgis Podmore, and Hestia Jones. They are all part of the Order of the Phoenix, which has been standing guard over Harry.

With the help of the wizards Harry takes refuge at 12 Grimmauld Place, the secret location of the house of the Black family, which Sirius has rendered available to the Order. Sirius is related to both Lucius Malfoy and to Bellatrix Lestrange.

At Harry's trial it seems that the higher authorities, chiefly under the instigation of Cornelius Fudge and Dolores Umbridge, are dead set on framing and condemning him as quickly as possible. However, unexpectedly, Dumbledore appears with solid evidence and convincing arguments to exonerate Harry of all responsibility, and the Wizengamot (magical high court) absolves him.

Things have changed at Hogwarts, where Dolores Umbridge has been appointed to be the Defense against the Dark Arts teacher. She is so confident of her new authority that she interrupts Dumbledore's speech at the start-of-term feast and informs the students of the new directives of the Ministry of Magic.

Dolores immediately shows her intentions by teaching the students an abstract rather than practical way of working with the Defense against the Dark Arts. Shortly after the beginning of classes Umbridge is named High Inquisitor by the Ministry of Magic, with liberty to supervise and assess the performances of all other teachers. Given the little they can learn from Umbridge, twenty-five students, instigated and organized by Hermione, decide to take practical instructions from Harry in spells that could defend them from Dark wizards. Classes of the Defense against the Dark Arts—also known as Dumbledore's Army—begin under Harry's instructions.

Harry wakes up one day in extreme pain after seeing—through Voldemort's eyes—that Ron's dad, Arthur Weasley, lies in critical condition after being attacked by the snake Nagini, Voldemort's envoy. This timely vision allows the Order of the Phoenix

to rush to Mr. Weasley's help and save him. As he speaks of the events to Dumbledore, Harry finds himself so affected that he can hardly control his rage against the headmaster, wondering to what degree Voldemort has gained control over him. Ginny Weasley reassures him that he at least isn't under an Imperius Curse, since she had this experience (See *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*) and does not recognize its severity in Harry.

Realizing the dangers that Harry faces with the connection with Voldemort's mind, Dumbledore sets him up for Occlumency classes under Snape's care. Occlumency—the ability to close one's mind against external influences—is the necessary defense against Voldemort's Legilimency, the ability to extract and implant memories and feelings from and into another person's mind. Harry only reaches mixed results, and up until the very end he will maintain a psychic connection with Voldemort's mind.

Soon after, in fact, Harry has a recurring dream in which he finds himself, together with Mr. Weasley, in a corridor inside the Ministry of Magic leading to the Department of Mysteries. Meanwhile Harry realizes that Voldemort is also very happy, a feeling that Hermione soon associates with the news that many Death Eaters have broken out of Azkaban and joined Voldemort's ranks.

Dumbledore's Army continues their lessons for a good while, until the Ravenclaw Marietta Edgecombe betrays the trust of the group to the High Inquisitor, Umbridge. Interrogations follow and Dumbledore decides to take the blame in order to shield Harry from reprisals. Before they can seize him, Dumbledore disappears.

In Dumbledore's office Harry uses the Pensieve again to investigate the matter of the Department of Mysteries inside the Ministry of Magic. His detours take him down the time when his father, Sirius, Lupin, and Snape were Hogwarts students. The way his father and friends humiliated and tormented Snape gives him second thoughts about his father, and he has to reconcile these revelations with the image he holds of him. Sirius reassures him that this was just a foolish phase that affected both him and his father.

Umbridge interrogates the students about Dumbledore's Army. Hermione is inspired to waylay the professor through the pretense of leading her to Dumbledore's "secret weapon." Through this she lures her into the Forbidden Forest. Once there they drop the pretenses and Umbridge is left prey to the centaurs, who have suffered her abuse and want to repay her in kind. Ultimately Dumbledore will save her.

In History of Magic class, Harry has a vision in which, under Voldemort's orders, Sirius has to reach for a sphere. When the latter refuses, Voldemort tortures him. Hermione cautions Harry that Voldemort may be laying him astray by implanting false images in his mind. Harry doesn't feel he can run the risk of leaving Sirius to his fate if the vision is true. He runs to the rescue with Ron, Hermione, Luna Lovegood, Neville Longbottom, and Ginny.

At the Ministry of Magic Harry recognizes the corridors he saw in his dreams. He arrives through various rooms to the one with the spheres and realizes that Sirius isn't there, confirming Hermione's suspicion. One of the spheres has Harry's name—it is a prophecy concerning him—and he reaches for it, just in time to hear Lucius Malfoy ordering him to hand it over.

Other Death Eaters arrive and Harry gains time in order to hold on to the prophecy. Lucius explains that they needed Harry to retrieve the memory for Voldemort, for the Dark Lord could not have penetrated the Ministry of Magic without raising the alarm. Harry was in effect manipulated through his dreams, as Hermione feared.

Harry devises a way to sow chaos and flee from the Death Eaters, but not without damage inflicted on Neville, Ginny, and Ron. When all resistance seems futile, rescue comes through the arrival of Sirius, Lupin, Moody, Tonks, and Kingsley, all members of the Order of the Phoenix.

In the confusion that follows, Harry loses hold of the sphere and the prophecy shatters. Bellatrix Lestrange manages to corner Sirius and kill him. Dumbledore and Voldemort arrive and start to fight each other. Voldemort manages to keep Harry under his spell by occupying his body. Harry feels unable to withstand the presence and the pain. He is willing to face death instead in the hope to see Sirius again. This courageous decision releases him from Voldemort's hold.

Dumbledore admits some responsibility in Sirius's death, not having disclosed fully to Harry the link he has with Voldemort through his scar. After the attack on Arthur Weasley, Voldemort figured out his connection with Harry's mind, and realized that if it worked one way, he could use it the other way round to his benefit. This is what Dumbledore tried to prevent by giving Harry Occlumency lessons with the help of Snape. Voldemort managed nevertheless to project the image of Sirius undergoing torture to lure Harry into the room of the spheres and retrieve the prophecy for him.

Dumbledore then explains to Harry the nature and limits of the prophecy. It was Professor Sybill Trelawney who had prophesied sixteen years earlier that Voldemort would mark as his equal a boy born at the end of July from parents who had defied him three times. Curiously, this description applied equally to Harry as to Neville Longbottom. Voldemort may have related the prophecy to Harry because both Harry and he were half-bloods. The second part of the prophecy has bearings for the epilogue of the confrontation between Harry and Voldemort. It said that the child would know a power superior to that of the Dark Lord, and that both must die at the hand of the other, because neither would survive while the other lived. The hidden power is love. Harry finds himself weighed down by this knowledge. He also feels the pain and guilt of the death of Sirius. Dumbledore has waited as much as possible before imposing more burdens on his protégé.

Harry has been left the gift of a mirror by Sirius with a note indicating that this would allow him to communicate with his godfather. In the frustration of not managing to use the mirror, Harry hurls it to the ground and shatters it, preserving only one

shard of it. He then seeks help from the ghost Nearly Headless Nick in communicating with Sirius, but the latter cannot help him because his godfather is not an earthbound soul.

Book 6: Harry and Snape: Knowledge or Wisdom

At the beginning of the story Snape meets with Bellatrix and her the sister Narcissa Malfoy, who asks him for help with her son, Draco. Narcissa believes her only son, the sixteen-year-old Draco, will have to perform an unnamed task (later revealed to be killing Dumbledore) as a payment for Lucius's failure to retrieve the prophecy from the Ministry. Under pressure Snape pledges to keep Draco safe by making an Unbreakable Vow to Narcissa. This also pledges Snape to fulfill the task that Voldemort has imposed upon Draco.

At Knockturn Alley (another London street hidden by magic), Harry, Ron and Hermione, under the Invisibility Cloak, follow Draco to Borgin and Burkes, a store that sells Dark objects. Here he has secret dealings with the shop owner, concerning something to be fixed and two objects, one of which needs to be kept safe in the shop. Following Draco on the train ride, Harry under the Invisibility Cloak gathers the inner certainty that Draco has become a Death Eater, since he speaks with glee about how things might be when Voldemort rises to power.

This year Severus Snape will be the one teaching the Defense against the Dark Arts class, and Horace Slughorn will be professor of Potions. Harry sets his goal on becoming an Auror, one who fights against the Dark Arts. In addition he will have private lessons with Dumbledore. Lacking a book of potions, Harry is given one by Slughorn, which, Harry finds out, belonged to a certain "Half-Blood Prince." The book is annotated with inscriptions of experiments for improving the potions. Following the indications of the Half-Blood Prince, Harry's potion turns out to be the best of the class and Harry is given the award of a Felix Felicis potion, one that is supposed to bring extraordinary luck for a day.

In his "lessons" Dumbledore wants to share all his knowledge about Voldemort and glean some more with Harry's help. For this purpose they use vials containing memories of individuals that they dip into the water of the Pensieve, where they can relive these memories. The first vial is that of a certain Bob Ogden of the Ministry of Magic, who has met with Marvolo Gaunt, Voldemort's grandfather. It revolves around a gold ring with a black stone, possessed by Gaunt, and a locket that his daughter, Riddle's mother Merope, hung on her neck. Merope has seduced Tom's father with a love potion. Once released from the spell, the father disappeared, while the mother found herself pregnant with Tom.

Exiting Dumbledore's office, Harry notices the same gold ring with a black stone he saw in the Pensieve. He remembers Dumbledore was wearing it when he came to the Dursleys. Dumbledore tells Harry he acquired it about the time in which he injured his hand.

On the way to the first student excursion of the year to Hogsmeade, Harry notices with outrage that Mundungus Fletcher is selling some of Sirius's belongings. He is prevented from attacking him and thereby committing a serious breach of magical

law, by Nymphadora Tonks. On the way back to Hogwarts, a strange event takes place. Katie Bell, who is carrying a package meant for somebody else, suddenly finds herself airborne six feet high, screaming in agony. The package has accidentally opened, revealing a silver and opal necklace, which Harry recognizes from his last visit at Borgin and Burkes. Harry is suspicious of Draco.

The next day Harry continues special lessons with Dumbledore through the use of the Pensieve and the memories of Caractacus Burke, the co-owner of Borgin and Burkes. He was the one buying Merope's locket, taking advantage of her despair at Tom's father's abandonment. The next memory is that of a younger Dumbledore at the time in which he visited Tom's orphanage and spoke both to his caretaker, Mrs. Cole, and Tom himself, inviting him to join Hogwarts.

Here we are privy to Tom's bullying behavior toward his schoolmates. We hear he visited a cave by the seaside with two children, who were never the same afterwards. Dumbledore tells him about Hogwarts, and Tom shows interest, Dumbledore points out he will have to change his behavior. It is clear that Tom remains defiant. On the way out of Dumbledore's office, Harry can't fail to notice that Marvolo's ring, which he saw the last time around, is missing.

Harry's bond with Dumbledore is strengthened as is shown by a minor episode. While vacationing with the Weasleys for Christmas, Rufus Scrimgeour (now Minister for Magic after Cornelius Fudge was ousted), drops in for what looks like a casual visit. He has come to enlist Harry for a public relations campaign to appease the wizarding community. Harry refuses and Scrimgeour accuses him of being "Dumbledore's man." Harry accepts this label with a certain pride, and later when he mentions this to the headmaster, Dumbledore is visibly moved.

Harry conveys to the headmaster his suspicions about Draco's conversation with Snape, which he overheard. At this time, as in others, when Snape is mentioned Dumbledore shows no concern. The lessons about Tom Riddle continue. This time Dumbledore refers to his experience directly. At Hogwarts Tom showed apparent change; he seduced practically the whole faculty, apart from Dumbledore. Now they follow Dumbledore's memories in the Pensieve, relating to the time in which Tom Riddle returned to visit Marvolo Gaunt's son Morfin, Merope's brother. At that time Tom stole Morfin's wand and killed both his father and his Riddle grandparents, in effect erasing the last of the Riddle line.

Dumbledore finally leads Harry through the memories of the last visit of Tom Riddle to Horace Slughorn, through the eyes of the latter. Here it transpires, Tom can hardly hide his interest in the deeply Dark magic of the Horcruxes, objects through which a magician can conceal and protect part of his soul, a Faustian bargain that comes with heavy consequences. Slughorn appears concerned and taken aback, but there is something in the whole interaction that rings hollow. That is because, Dumbledore reveals, Slughorn has tampered with the memory, no doubt to cover his shame. Dumbledore entrusts Harry with the task of retrieving the real memory from his professor.

Professor Slughorn teaches his students about antidotes to poison. Though Harry is clearly at a loss to master the topic, he just follows an instruction by the Half-Blood Prince to place a bezoar in the person's throat, easily gaining the praise of Slughorn. This knowledge will offer rescue in what starts as a benign prank. Ron is under the spell of a love potion that acted on him when he ate chocolates destined as a gift to Harry. The friend manages to take the infatuated Ron to Slughorn, who concocts him an antidote.

When everything seems resolved, Slughorn pulls out a bottle of mead he had set aside for Dumbledore. Ron is the first to drink from it and he instantly begins to convulse. Ron is saved by Harry's prompt reflexes in finding a bezoar and shoving it down Ron's throat.

During the next Quidditch game, Harry is hit with a Bludger and wakes up in the hospital wing next to Ron, who is recovering from the poisoned mead. Harry remembers that Draco disappeared with two young girls previous to the game, an odd behavior given his interest in Quidditch. He now summons the house-elves Kreacher and Dobby to follow Draco's tracks.

At the next session with Dumbledore the headmaster recalls what a brilliant student Riddle had been. Being turned down to remain at Hogwarts as instructor of Defense against the Dark Arts, because of his young age, Riddle went to work at Borgin and Burkes instead, pursuing the purchase of Dark or unusual objects for the shop, but also for himself. Dumbledore then retrieves the memories of the old witch Hepzibah Smith, who showed Voldemort two very rare objects: a small golden cup that belonged to Helga Hufflepuff, one of the four founders of Hogwarts, and the locket, which bore Slytherin's mark, that Merope sold to Borgin and Burkes years earlier, and Hepzibah bought from the shop.

Voldemort instantly coveted the two objects, which Hepzibah didn't put out for sale. The old witch died soon after the visit. At her death the cup and the locket were found to be missing. Coincidentally Voldemort also quit working for Borgin and Burkes. The Dark Lord had taken a further step in cold, calculated murder, killing for gain rather than revenge.

The next memory Dumbledore shares in the Pensieve is that of Voldemort's visit to Hogwarts ten years after the murder. At that time Voldemort had returned to ask once more for the position of teacher of Defense Against the Dark Arts. Dumbledore denied him and he notices that ever since the position has not been held for more than one year.

Harry is almost obsessed by the margin writings of the Half-Blood Prince in his book of Potions. There he notices a spell called *Sectumsempra* destined "for enemies." Meanwhile he also learns from his two house-elves that Draco is curiously spending much time in the Room of Requirement, which explains both his prolonged disappearances and Harry's inability to find him on the Marauder's Map (a magical map of Hogwarts that identifies anyone within its walls).

At a loss on how to induce Slughorn to share his true memory about the Horcruxes, Harry decides to tempt his luck and use his Felix Felicis potion. Through a detour of circumstances Harry, Slughorn, and Hagrid find themselves close to Hagrid's hut, mourning the dead giant spider Aragog. Hagrid and Slughorn talk and drink until quite inebriated, and Harry sees an opening to Slughorn's soft spot in his great fondness for Lily Potter, thus retrieving the real memory, of which the teacher is not proud.

Harry and Dumbledore can now relive the memory in the Pensieve. What is added to the previous, altered memory, are the specifics of the Horcruxes, and Slughorn's answers to Voldemort, curious about splitting the soul in seven Horcruxes, in order to preserve his life indefinitely as long as the Horcruxes survive. The professor is a bit aghast at the questions and warns Voldemort that splitting the soul can only be accomplished when one commits murder, and the choice carries serious consequences.

Dumbledore now understands that Voldemort has really carried out what looked like a hypothetical pursuit, and that the only way to kill the Dark Lord is to destroy all of his Horcruxes. He understands that two of these have already been destroyed. The first one is Tom Riddle's diary (which Harry destroyed with a basilisk fang in Book 2); the second one, Marvolo's ring, unbeknownst to Harry, withered Dumbledore's hand when he destroyed it. The headmaster suggests that Slytherin's locket, Hufflepuff's cup, and the snake Nagini are three other Horcruxes.

Harry now has many clues to follow. He manages finally to enter the Room of Requirement and there finds Draco, crying and sobbing because he fears for his life if he fails with the task entrusted him by the Dark Lord. When Draco promptly reacts to the intruder, Harry resorts to calling on the *Sectumsempra* spell of the Half-Blood Prince, nearly killing Draco through wounds on his face and chest. Fortunately for both, Snape has arrived, and he manages to revive Draco. Snape knows that Harry has the Half-Blood Prince's book, because it was his own book when he adopted that name. Harry manages to conceal the evidence.

Harry has been summoned to Dumbledore's office, but before then he meets a distressed Professor Trelawney. On the way to the office she speaks to Harry about her first prophecy about Harry and Voldemort. She adds key details, important for Harry. When she first shared the prophecy, Snape managed to eavesdrop. Since he was secretly in league with Voldemort, and a Death Eater to boot, he reported what information he heard to Voldemort. Snape was thus partly responsible for Voldemort's ensuing murder of Harry's parents.

Dumbledore announces to Harry that he has found the hiding place of another Horcrux and that he will need Harry's help to retrieve it, in the same cave in which Voldemort terrorized the two children of the orphanage. The two head off in pursuit of the Horcrux. Dumbledore indicates to Harry that he needs complete obedience from him, no matter what he may ask of him. Harry consents and the two Apparate (magically travel instantaneously) in close proximity to the cave.

Harry helps Dumbledore retrieve the Horcrux, hidden under the water in a basin on an island of the underwater cave. Getting to the island is not the hardest part; the rest is. The Horcrux is protected and set under a liquid, which Dumbledore realizes he needs to drink no matter what it may do to him. He proceeds to the difficult task and is besieged by memories and what looks like guilt. When he can no longer do this on his own, it befalls Harry to force Dumbledore to drink. The two retrieve what they believe to be the Horcrux, a golden locket, and head back to Hogwarts.

They return as far back as Hogsmeade, with Dumbledore very debilitated. From Hogsmeade they see the ominous Dark Mark of Lord Voldemort over the Astronomy Tower of Hogwarts, and they rush to the school's rescue. They land on the tower, and Harry finds himself hidden and paralyzed under his Invisibility Cloak under a spell that Dumbledore silently placed on him. Soon after Death Eaters erupt on the scene, and Draco casts an *Expelliarmus* charm on Dumbledore, causing him to lose his wand.

Draco reveals what has happened at Hogwarts, how he communicated with and traveled to the outside world through the Vanishing Cabinet in the Room of Requirements and its twin at Borgin and Burkes. He also admits that he was the one who delivered the cursed necklace to Katie Bell and the poisoned mead to Slughorn. But finally, when he has the headmaster under his control, Draco is deeply torn about killing him, as the Dark Lord has demanded he do.

Dumbledore understands the quandary Draco is under and tries to convince him to save his soul and seek shelter with the Order of the Phoenix. As the situation carries on, Snape arrives on the scene and casts *Avada Kedavra* at Dumbledore, instantly killing him. The wizard falls out the window to the ground below. Harry runs in pursuit of Snape and Draco before they exit Hogwarts where they would be able to Apparate. When Harry runs the danger of being killed by the Death Eaters, it is Snape who stops his attacker and reminds him that Harry belongs to the Dark Lord.

Harry, blind in his rage, is willing to give up his life, and attempts a *Levicorpus* jinx on Snape, but fails. Snape approaches Harry lying on the ground and reveals that this spell he was trying on him is his own. Through Hermione Harry learns that Snape was the son of Eileen Prince, and that is why he adopted the Half-Blood Prince name ("half-blood" meaning that one parent was a witch or wizard and the other a Muggle).

Harry contemplates the destruction of the golden locket Horcrux, but finds inside it a note by a mysterious R.A.B., saying that he has stolen the real Horcrux, that he intends to destroy it, and that he replaced it with the present, a false one.

As Lupin and Tonks inquire about how Dumbledore was killed, outside the building the phoenix Fawkes is singing. Hogwarts prepares to offer a memorial service to its headmaster and bury him with dignity. Harry is now weighed down with the thought of how many people have died trying to defend him. He does not want this to happen to Ginny, and although they had only started dating partway

through the school year, asks her not to be together, at least not until Voldemort has eventually died.

Book Seven: Harry and Lord Voldemort: Physical Immortality or Resurrection

After Dumbledore's death, eulogies and articles paint a contrasting picture of Hogwarts' headmaster. Though part of the maligning is to be expected, Harry is affected by it, and in him grows the desire to come to know the truth about his master. Thus he comes to know that Albus's father had been imprisoned at Azkaban for attacking Muggles, and that after what has been an unclear relationship with the Dark wizard Gellert Grindelwald, Dumbledore vanquished him in a famous duel in 1945.

Voldemort has been informed about plans to move Harry Potter to a place of safety by Snape who, however, has withheld some key information. The day of his projected departure from the Dursleys, Harry is met by a contingent of wizards and students: Ron, Hermione, Fleur Delacour, Mad-Eye Moody, Fred and George Weasley, Bill Weasley, Arthur Weasley, Remus Lupin, Tonks, Kingsley Shacklebolt, and Mundungus Fletcher. Mad-Eye has decided for a change of plan, fearing a betrayal. While Harry travels to Tonks's parents' house, the other five students plus Mundungus, transformed into Harry's copies, will serve as decoys, and go to other houses. Harry is paired up with Hagrid on his flying motorbike.

To their dismay Harry and Hagrid find themselves almost immediately surrounded by thirty Death Eaters and Harry is recognized by one of them, who calls for Voldemort. Harry is overwhelmed and should logically die at Voldemort's hand, but somehow below the level of consciousness he pulls out his wand and summons a warding spell, of which he has no conscious knowledge, which destroys the wand the Dark Lord took from Lucius Malfoy.

Harry and Hagrid receive healing at the Tonkses' house, and travel with a Portkey to the Weasley's house. Everyone who was part of the flying contingent finally makes safe landing at the Weasleys', except Mad-Eye Moody, who has been killed.

Harry knows that he will not go back to Hogwarts, because he realizes the urgency of continuing Dumbledore's task of destroying Voldemort's Horcruxes. He soon finds out that both Ron and Hermione have decided likewise to accompany him on the quest. Meanwhile, back at Hogwarts, following Dumbledore's last wish, Snape has become headmaster, but his authority is rivaled by that of two Death Eaters, Alecto and Amycus Carrow.

The three friends are all called to the presence of Rufus Scrimgeour, Minister of Magic, come to bring them objects that Dumbledore has bequeathed them: to Ron a Deluminator, a device that can switch on or off all lights in the immediate vicinity; to Hermione a copy of the book *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*; to Harry, the first Snitch Harry ever caught in a Quidditch game. Dumbledore had also planned to leave Harry the sword of Godric Gryffindor, but the Ministry of Magic considered it part of its patrimony. The three are quite perplexed by their gifts. At least Harry

remembers that he caught his first Snitch in his mouth and so brings it to his lips and sees words appear on it: "I open at the close."

Seeing through Voldemort's eyes, Harry has a dream of a man called Gregorovitch, whom Voldemort hopes can have an answer to a problem that eludes him. Later, at Bill Weasley and Fleur Delacour's wedding, Harry remembers that Gregorovitch is the wand maker who made Krum's wand (in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*). Soon, however, the party is interrupted by an attack of masked and cloaked figures. Harry, Hermione, and Ron Apparate and land in London at Tottenham Court Road, taking refuge in a coffee shop, only to realize they have been followed.

After they escape the attack of two Death Eaters disguised as workmen, the three friends Apparate again and find themselves at 12 Grimmauld Place, a safe place and the secret safe house of the Order of the Phoenix, which Harry has inherited from Sirius. Hermione has placed in a tiny, magical beaded handbag a variety of things they might need, including a magic tent, clothes, Harry's Invisibility Cloak, a variety of books, and an ample supply of Polyjuice Potion.

Among the various documents at 12 Grimmauld, the friends find evidence that Harry's parents had known a certain Bathilda Bagshot, whose name figured prominently as a source for Dumbledore's biography. Dumbledore shares another connection with the Potters, having lived with his family at Godric's Hollow, where the Potters lived and met their death. Harry yearns to go there but is kept on the track of the Horcruxes by Hermione. The friends also find that the initials R.A.B. found in the fake locket retrieved by Dumbledore and Harry in the seacoast cave (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*) are those of Regulus Arcturus Black, Sirius's brother who had been a Death Eater and then repented.

The three friends meet again the house-elf Kreacher, who knew about the story of the locket because Voldemort tested the defenses around it on the poor house-elf, bringing him close to death. Kreacher had returned to the cave with Regulus when he had in mind to steal the locket. Regulus stole the locket and replaced it with the false one before dying. Kreacher, who managed to bring it back to his master's house, knows that the last to lay its hands on it was Mundungus Fletcher. Harry wins over Kreacher, offering him the false locket in memory of his master, and asks him to seek Mundungus. Once Kreacher brings back Mundungus to 12 Grimmauld, the friends learn that the locket is in possession of Dolores Umbridge.

Hermione knows that the portrait of Phineas Nigellus Black—a former headmaster—at 12 Grimmauld Place allows the magician to move between the house and the painting of him in Dumbledore's office at Hogwarts. She stows the picture away in the beaded bag to avoid being spied upon.

Harry, Hermione, and Ron take the next weeks trying to figure out how to make their way into the Ministry of Magic, now under the grip of Voldemort's allies, using the Invisibility Cloak and Polyjuice Potion to disguise themselves as individuals employed at the Ministry. Hermione turns herself into Mafalda Hopkirk, Ron into a man named Cattermole, and Harry becomes a wizard named Runcorn, a senior

member of the Ministry. After various detours, Harry and Hermione end up in the presence of Umbridge conducting a mock trial of Cattermole's wife accused of being a Mud-blood (a derogatory term for having one or both Muggle parents). Umbridge has the locket, which she wears on her neck. Acting on impulse, feeling this is the only possibility, Harry casts a spell on Umbridge, Hermione steals the locket, and they meet with Ron before Apparating.

The three friends find themselves first at 12 Grimmauld, then in a forest near the site where the Quidditch World Cup took place the year before. Ron is gravely wounded, not having managed to fully Apparate. The friends are in hiding and cannot move fast because Ron needs healing. Even though they have the locket with the Horcrux, they don't know how to destroy it, or how to start looking for the others.

Harry has had a couple of visions. In one he realizes Voldemort is likely looking for Gregorovitch's explanation for how Harry's wand defeated him, when Harry should have normally died. In another he sees the Dark Lord interrogating the wand maker, and finding out that a blond young man has stolen the wand. Enraged, Voldemort kills Gregorovitch. Harry recognizes the thief's face but doesn't know his name.

One night the three friends eavesdrop on a conversation between a young wizard and a goblin. They learn that Ginny, Neville, and Luna attempted to steal the sword of Gryffindor from Snape's office. The goblins, however, know it is a fake one. When they ask Phineas Nigellus Black in his painting they hold captive about the sword, the companions come to know that Dumbledore scorched his hand when he destroyed Marvolo Gaunt's ring in his office. This also explains why Dumbledore left the sword in his will to Harry and why he replaced it with a fake one, fearing it would be confiscated.

Meanwhile, the long waiting, constant moving, and little food aggravate Ron's mood to the breaking point, until he decides to leave, vainly trying to enlist Hermione to his side. All this time Harry has not given up on his wish to see Godric's Hollow and the grave of his parents. Hermione finally rallies to his cause because she thinks that Godric's Hollow is the most likely place to find Gryffindor's sword since it was Godric Gryffindor's birthplace. At the same time, while reading *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* she has discovered a symbol that looks like a triangular eye, with a vertical line for a pupil. Harry remembers he has seen the symbol worn by Luna's father at Bill and Fleur's wedding.

Harry and Hermione go to Godric's Hollow disguised as Muggles on Christmas Eve and visit the graveyard. Hermione recognizes the triangular symbol on the grave of a certain Ignotus Peverell. Harry finds the grave of his parents, which bears the inscription "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

Not far from the graveyard Harry and Hermione spy an old woman who seems to be beckoning to them, and who has the appearance of Bathilda Bagshot. She

silently leads them to her house, where Harry recognizes a photo of the of young man who stole the wand from Gregorovitch—the wizard Gellert Grindelwald—together with a young Albus Dumbledore. The deceptive Bathilda is in reality a dead body, occupied and animated by Voldemort's snake Nagini, as Harry finds out much to his dismay. It is Hermione who manages to neutralize the snake with a blasting curse. Before the two can Apparate, Voldemort has arrived, just in time for Harry to relive through his eyes the night that Voldemort killed his parents. After killing James and Lily, Voldemort attempted to get rid of Harry as well, but he was ripped from his body, and rested in a state consisting of nothing but pain and terror.

Harry is distraught because his wand was shattered during the snake's attack. He knows it was this wand, not his knowledge of magic, that protected him from Voldemort in his flight from the Dursley's home. He realizes Voldemort has just gained important information in his search for the wand through the picture at Bathilda's house.

In reading through Rita Skeeter's book, *The Life and Lies of Albus Dumbledore*, Harry now finds out that Dumbledore had apparently shared great plans with Gellert Grindelwald. In a letter he wrote to Grindelwald, the young Dumbledore expressed his dream of a world in which the wizards would dominate the Muggles for their own sake. He finally learns of a chaotic episode in which Dumbledore and Grindelwald parted ways after the death of Dumbledore's sister Ariana. Harry's faith in Dumbledore is shaken, even when Hermione reminds him of Rita Skeeter's dubious reputation as a writer and journalist.

One night while he is on watch, Harry sees a bright light that turns into a silver doe. He follows it to a frozen pond, at the bottom of which he spies the sword of Gryffindor. He strips off his clothes and dives to retrieve it. To his surprise the locket Horcrux on his neck fights against him. It would have drowned him were it not for Ron Weasley who brings Harry to safety, then retrieves the Horcrux himself. The two decide that Harry will order the Horcrux to open in Parseltongue, the language of snakes, and that Ron will destroy it with the sword. When the locket is open it speaks words of deception to Ron, indicating that he is the least loved of the Weasley children and that Hermione loves Harry, not him. Ron finds the strength to bring down the sword on the locket nevertheless, and destroys it. Harry reassures him that Hermione is nothing more than his friend.

Ron explains that upon his departure he was taken captive by a gang of Snatchers, Voldemort's bounty hunters, and lost track of their whereabouts. It was the Deluminator that helped him on Christmas Day. He first heard his name called out of it by Hermione and then something about a wand. This was in fact the first time Hermione and Harry had spoken Ron's name since he had left. Then Ron saw a ball of light coming out of the Deluminator, which went inside his chest. He inwardly knew where to Apparate and, when he arrived in proximity to the tent, the silver doe led him to the pond in time to rescue Harry. Ron gives Harry an extra wand he stole from the Snatchers, and Ron and Hermione gradually reconcile.

Following Hermione's inspiration, the group decides to go see Xenophilius Lovegood because he is familiar with the symbol of the circle and triangle they saw on Ignotus Peverell's tomb. Xenophilius tells them this is the sign of the Deathly Hallows and proceeds to tell them of the three brothers who met with Death and each asked for a gift. The first one asked for the Resurrection Stone in order to be able to see and speak to the departed souls; the second one asked for the powerful Elder Wand that would make him invincible; and the last requested the Cloak of Invisibility. The first brother regretted his choice because, although he could call back the dead, he could not bring them back to life. The second one ended up losing his life to another magician who stole his wand, initiating a trend for many other ones. The two brothers ended up captive to death. Only the third one survived without troubles and passed on the Cloak of Invisibility to his son.

Xenophilius adds to the tale the belief that he who will possess the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Cloak of Invisibility will be master over death. Notice in passing that the Sorcerer's Stone (of Nicolas Flamel) has now become the Resurrection Stone. The Elder Wand is the theme that the book has quietly followed and that Voldemort has been pursuing.

Harry felt that throughout their sojourn something was amiss with Xenophilius. He now realizes that he has betrayed them to the Ministry. The three fight their way out of the trap by neutralizing the Death Eaters who come after them. Hermione takes measures to ensure Xenophilius's survival, knowing that he betrayed them to save his daughter Luna, which has been kidnapped by the Ministry.

Having learned about the Deathly Hallows, Harry believes in their reality and is strangely fascinated by the subject to the point of wanting to follow the Hallows, rather than the Horcruxes. He intuits at this point that Dumbledore must have hidden the Resurrection Stone inside Harry's Snitch.

The three are seized by a gang of Snatchers, not without Hermione finding the time to render Harry unrecognizable through a spell. The Snatchers believe they have an important catch nevertheless. They also recognize the sword of Gryffindor and decide to take the friends to the Malfoy Manor. Harry follows a vision inside Voldemort's mind and sees him flying to the top of the black fortress of Nurmengard, built by Grindelwald as a prison for his opponents.

At the manor, the Malfoys try to identify if the captive is Harry, but Draco hesitates when asked and the couple don't want to risk Voldemort's ire without full certainty. Wormtail is also there and Bellatrix Lestrange has meanwhile identified the sword of Gryffindor. She panics because she thought it safely guarded in a Gringotts bank vault. She has Ron and Harry locked up in the cellar, while she interrogates Hermione. Harry and Ron are captive with Luna; Ollivander the wandmaker; Dean Thomas, a fellow Gryffindor; and Griphook, a Gringotts goblin. Ron uses his Deluminator to bring light to the basement and Harry takes out the shard of Sirius's mirror, in which he spies once more a blue eye looking at him, much like Dumbledore's.

Hermione claims that the sword is a fake and the friends persuade Griphook to lie and corroborate her word when he is brought up in the presence of Bellatrix. Unbeknownst to Harry, the shard of the mirror has placed them in touch with Aberforth Dumbledore—brother of Albus Dumbledore—who has sent the house-elf Dobby to their rescue. Harry knows that Dobby can Apparate and asks him to take Luna, Ollivander, and Dean to Bill and Fleur's house.

Bellatrix, believing the sword is a fake, feels safe in summoning Voldemort. Harry sees in a vision Voldemort enraged at being summoned, and, in his impatience, killing Grindelwald at the Nurmengard fortress. He understands that this has something to do with the wand.

Before Voldemort can approach them, Dobby has returned and can take the rest of the party to safety with him. Dobby has even seized Bellatrix's wand, but the witch has managed to aim a silver knife at him. The party reaches safety at Bill's house, all but Dobby who has been fatally wounded by the knife. The party has also seized the wands of Bellatrix and Draco. The last events have finally convinced Harry to return on the track of the Horcruxes, rather than the Hallows.

Bellatrix seemed overly distressed at the thought that the friends may have broken into her vault. Intuiting that one of the Horcruxes must be in her vault at Gringotts, Harry works at enlisting the help of Griphook, and manages to a degree. He must, however, pay a heavy price for their collaboration since Griphook wants to be rewarded with the sword, which is also their means to destroy the Horcruxes.

Harry can also question the wandmaker Ollivander at Bill's house. From him he understands that Voldemort has heard about the Elder Wand and followed all its last owners, true or presumed: Gregorovitch and then Grindelwald suffered at his hands. If Harry has understood that the wand passed into Dumbledore's ownership, so will Voldemort. But Harry realizes he cannot stop Voldemort from seizing Dumbledore's wand at Hogwarts.

To break into Gringotts, Hermione disguises herself as Bellatrix Lestrange and changes Ron's appearance so he's unrecognizable, while Harry and Griphook hide under the Invisibility Cloak. Things don't turn out as easy as planned since Gringotts is on the alarm in relation to Bellatrix's status. The loss of her wand is known. Harry finds himself under the need to use the Imperius Curse on the goblin who takes care of Bellatrix's vault, and on a second customer in order to be cleared to get into the vault. Things get worse as they make their way there. First their disguises are undone, then they find a dragon guarding the vaults, which fortunately Griphook can subdue.

In the vault at Gringotts Harry is looking for Hufflepuff's cup, the only object he suspects to be a Horcrux. The search becomes very tricky because a spell in the vault allows every object that has been touched to multiply and turn hot. Just when the situation becomes unbearable they finally see the cup and Harry is able to

retrieve it. He has to let go of the sword, which Griphook seizes. Hermione will charge herself of destroying the Horcrux with a basilisk fang.

The alarm has been sounded at Gringotts and the companions have only one daring way to escape: free the dragon and jump on his back to force their way to the surface and elude all the goblins and Death Eaters. The plan succeeds and the dragon takes them far off, until he prepares to descend, and the companions make sure to jump safely in a pond before the dragon lands.

Harry can then enter Voldemort's mind, whereby he is able to confirm that the wizard is aware of the loss of the Horcrux. This means that the Dark Lord has finally become aware of the deliberate plan of destroying the Horcruxes. He is now making sure to keep his last Horcrux, Nagini, by his side at all time. Another Horcrux lies at Hogwarts, and the companions only have a vague inkling that it may belong to the last of Hogwarts' houses, Ravenclaw. Knowing they have to enter the school, which isn't safe for them, they decide to Apparate at Hogsmeade.

At Hogsmeade the alarm is soon set and the Death Eaters are on the friends' track. Even though they are under the Invisibility Cloak, this is little safety when the Death Eaters call on the dementors to finish their job. Harry has to summon his Patronus to fend them off, thereby betraying their presence and whereabouts. The three are only saved by the timely intervention of Aberforth, the owner of the Three Broomsticks pub and brother of Dumbledore. Being used to dealing with the Death Eaters, Aberforth leads them to believe he was the one who sent off his goat Patronus to rescue his cat. Harry finally recognizes the eye he has been seeing in the shard of Sirius mirror, as that of Aberforth, rather than Dumbledore, as he believed. And he hears Aberforth was the one who sent Dobby to their rescue.

When Aberforth puts in doubt Dumbledore's purity of intention and points out the futility of resisting Voldemort's plans, Harry makes a stand that he has not given up on the goals of the Order of the Phoenix. Aberforth finally explains the missing pieces of Albus Dumbledore's life. Ariana was his sister, who had awakened early to her magic abilities and had been attacked by three older Muggles, causing her to lose mental stability. The father avenged himself on the Muggles, infringing magic law and receiving an Azkaban sentence in return. The event deeply marked Dumbledore's life, hence his early and short flirtation with the idea of a world run by wizards to control the Muggles, with the intent of creating a world in which someone like his sister could be safe. This brought him closer to Grindelwald, whose aims went much further than those of Dumbledore.

At one point in the growth of the plans of Grindelwald and Dumbledore, Aberforth confronted them both with the reality of Ariana's care needs, which would not allow Dumbledore to run freely through the world. In the argument that followed Grindelwald cast the Cruciatu Curse on Aberforth. Ariana intervened to separate the parties, only to be hit by one of the curses the three were shooting at each other. Harry tells Aberforth that he saw the weight of the guilt that Dumbledore carried when he went to retrieve the locket in the sea cave, and the magician had to drink the liquid from the basin.

Aberforth consents to helping the companions, through a secret tunnel, not known to Hogwarts, that connects Hogsmeade to the school. Through it first emerges the figure of Longbottom. Neville has been organizing Hogwarts's resistance to the domination of the two Death Eaters Amycus and Alecto, and kept alive Dumbledore's Army. Neville leads the three friends into the Room of Requirement, where they meet another twenty members of Dumbledore's Army, among them Luna and Dean.

Harry agrees to enlist the help of the Hogwarts students, even though he doesn't want to disclose the nature of the Horcruxes. When he asks about a precious object for Ravenclaw, Luna explains the legend of the diadem of Ravenclaw, whose reproduction stands on the statue of Rowena Ravenclaw.

Luna leads Harry to where he can see the statue, but they are surprised by Alecto, who alerts Voldemort. Harry, still mentally connected to Voldemort, realizes he has some time to act before his arrival. In the commotion that follows in Ravenclaw's common room, Harry sees Amycus spit on McGonagall's face and sends him a Cruciatus Curse. Snape also arrives on the scene but is forced to flee.

The Hogwarts professors have decided to organize the resistance to Voldemort and his hordes, while Harry is looking for the Horcruxes. When Voldemort offers to spare all of Hogwarts if Harry is handed over before midnight, all of the houses, aside from Slytherin, rally behind Potter. Thus begins the Battle of Hogwarts.

The ghost of Helena Ravenclaw relates to Harry the story of how Voldemort came across the diadem, used it as a Horcrux, and hid it in Hogwarts. Harry suddenly remembers seeing the diadem in the Room of Requirement, when he hid his Half-Blood Prince's potions book there (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*). Getting to the Room of Requirement, Harry finds the diadem but also meets with Draco and his fellow Slytherins Crabbe and Goyle, who want to capture the prize for Voldemort. In the fight over it, Harry drops the diadem after Crabbe uses a Fiendfyre spell. In the little time left for evacuating, Harry and Ron seize two brooms and come to the rescue of Hermione, Goyle, and Malfoy. Fortunately the Fiendfyre spell was able to destroy the diadem.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione reach the Shrieking Shack through the underground passage from Hogwarts. There they see Voldemort complaining to Snape that the Elder Wand has not conferred him the extraordinary powers he sought. Voldemort indicates this is the case because Snape killed Dumbledore, and Voldemort can only be the lawful wand's master by killing Snape. On Voldemort's orders Nagini mortally wounds Snape. Harry comes to the side of the dying Snape, just in time for him to expel a silvery substance from his mouth, nose, and ears. Harry collects it in a flask.

Voldemort has given the school a one-hour reprieve before Harry comes to meet him in the Forbidden Forest. Before this Harry decides to see Snape's memories in Dumbledore's Pensieve, thereby making important discoveries about the one he always believed to be his enemy. Harry sees the earliest memories and the

friendship forming between Snape and Lily Evans, later Potter. He also sees the distance that grows over time between the two when Snape turns to the Dark Arts and Lily befriends and becomes close to James Potter. He sees how James and Sirius taunt and mock Severus. Snape progressively grows jealous of James Potter and contemptuous of those he calls Mudbloods, further alienating Lily.

This train of events leads to a momentous decision Snape will regret all his life. Having pledged allegiance to Voldemort, Snape has referred back to him what he heard of Harry Potter's prophecy from Sybill Trelawney. This ill-fated choice brings death to James, and Lily, who nevertheless protected her child. Snape, besieged by pain and remorse, pledges to Dumbledore that he will do everything he can to protect Harry for the love he felt for Lily. He enjoins the headmaster to keep his resolve secret.

Finally, Snape's memories also throw light on Dumbledore's fate. He sees Snape ministering to Dumbledore with potions. He knows that Dumbledore was debilitated in the act of putting on Marvolo Gaunt's ring, forgetting that it was a Horcrux, burning his hand and affecting his whole body. Harry sees that through Snape's ministering Dumbledore can prolong his life, but only for a year. Dumbledore asks Snape to take care of Hogwarts when he passes on, to help Draco find his way, and to kill Dumbledore himself at the opportune moment. He also asks Snape, when Voldemort would eventually find himself and Nagini threatened, to inform Harry of what really happened when Voldemort killed Lily and Harry, that the curse then bound a piece of the Dark Lord's soul to Harry's. This explains why Harry can read Voldemort's mind and speak Parseltongue. Harry is in fact the last Horcrux, and Voldemort can only die after he kills Harry. This revelation infuriates Snape, who feels he has been used, first to save Harry, then to send him to his death like a lamb for slaughter.

It is also Dumbledore who decided the date of Harry's escape from the Dursleys, and asked Snape to inform Voldemort, but hide the idea of the six decoys. Finally it was Phineas Black who communicated to Snape the three friends' whereabouts, allowing Snape to place the sword under the pool and lure Harry to it with his Patronus, the silver doe, which was also Lily Potter's Patronus.

Harry can now summon enough energy for the fate that awaits him and that he has accepted. Still, he is doubtful it will be enough since there remains Nagini, the snake, to be killed. Harry is lucky, however, to run into Neville and let him know of the need to dispose of the snake.

Harry puts on the Invisibility Cloak to go into the forest, and takes out the Snitch, whose message is "I open at the close." He tells it he is about to die, and the Snitch opens, revealing the cracked Resurrection Stone, which invokes the shades of his parents, Sirius, and Lupin. They reassure him that dying doesn't hurt and that they will stand by him.

As Harry moves further toward his fate, the dementors who attack him have lost power over him. The shades of his beloved ones protect him like Patronuses. Harry arrives in the presence of Voldemort, and drops the stone, causing the shades to vanish. He puts away the wand to resist the urge to use it. When Voldemort casts *Avada Kedavra*, Harry turns his last thoughts to Ginny, then all fades away.

Harry awakens in what looks like another place, another time, though vaguely reminiscent of King's Cross Station. He sees what looks like a whimpering little child that awakens his pity, but also causes him to recoil. Dumbledore tells him he can offer it no help. The headmaster explains that Voldemort has just killed the part of his own soul which was present in Harry, therefore Harry is now free. Lily's Potter blood, still pulsing in Voldemort's blood from when Harry's blood helped him be reborn (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*), has kept him alive. He offers the paradox that while Harry had to die before Voldemort could, Harry can't die while Voldemort lives. The wizard goes on to explain the mystery of the wands. When he overpowered Voldemort in the night pursuit, Harry won because of his greater courage and because the wand recognized Voldemort as the mortal enemy even when Harry lacked full consciousness. It turned some of the wizard's Dark magic against him and destroyed Lucius's wand.

Dumbledore then unveils the last hidden parts of his biography. He admits he was seduced by the power yielded by the Deathly Hallows, the power that would make him master over death, and this craving drew him to Grindelwald before he realized the fullness of his Dark intentions. Sobered by the events, Dumbledore decided to curb his power ambitions by devoting himself to teaching at Hogwarts.

The magician also delayed facing Grindelwald in the fear of learning that it was himself who caused Ariana's death. He wrested the wand from Grindelwald and took it to his death without using it for the conquest of power. He borrowed the Cloak of Invisibility to study its power just before the Potters' death, but left it alone. However, he couldn't resist using the Resurrection Stone to connect to his sister and parents, bringing upon himself the curse of the Horcrux and his premature death. He praises Harry for not using the Hallows for selfish reasons. Harry now has to conquer the Elder Wand that Voldemort owns. Dumbledore thought he had brought the wand to a safe place when he placed it in his casket, but that was not a difficult problem for Voldemort to overcome. He lets Harry know that, however, Voldemort possesses little understanding of the Deathly Hallows. He only seeks physical immortality.

Harry returns in consciousness to the scene of his death by the *Avada Kedavra* curse, without showing signs of life. Voldemort sends Narcissa Malfoy to check whether his foe is alive. The latter lies about Harry's death in exchange for the information that her son is alive. Voldemort toys with Harry's body, casting at it a Cruciatius Curse that sends him airborne, but Harry doesn't feel any pain. Then Hagrid is ordered to lift his body and take it to Hogwarts.

Voldemort shows Harry's supposedly dead body and asks for Hogwarts's obedience, and for all to kneel before him and "join [him] in the new world we shall build

together." McGonagall, Ron, and Hermione express loud defiance at Voldemort, and Neville Longbottom comes forward to confront him, rejecting Voldemort's flattering offers if he submits to his will. Voldemort summons and places the Sorting Hat on his head and lights it on fire. However, to everyone's surprise Neville is shortly after able to pull Gryffindor's sword from the hat and with it kill Nagini.

Thinking about what happened with Neville, Harry realizes that his life sacrifice has acted as a protective charm toward his Hogwarts peers, spreading a protective cloak over them, not unlike Lily Potter did with him as a baby. These are all the kinds of things Voldemort will never understand.

A new battle erupts in which Harry participates for a while, sending curses under his Invisibility Cloak. Harry decides it's finally time to defy Voldemort in the open. For a time the two intimidate each other with new revelations. Harry explains to Voldemort how deceived he was about Snape's role and allegiances and about Dumbledore's real cause of death. He tells him he is also under illusion concerning the power of his Elder Wand, because it was Draco who took it from Dumbledore, not Snape. Therefore it doesn't still fully obey Voldemort. Owing to the fact that Harry defeated Draco and took possession of his wand, the Elder Wand must know him as its true master. And he invites Voldemort to put these thoughts to the test.

Vainly does Voldemort send his *Avada Kedavra* curse at Harry, who simply responds with an *Expelliarmus* charm. Voldemort's own curse rebounds, causing him instant death, whereas Harry's spell places him in possession of the Elder Wand.

Harry, acting like a new Ignotus Peverell, talks to Dumbledore's portrait in the office, announcing him that he will leave the Resurrection Stone where it fell, place the wand in Dumbledore's grave anew—so that by the time Harry dies it would lose its power—and keep the Invisibility Cloak. Dumbledore approves.