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### Knowledge of a Death Eater: A Marginal Plot in the Harry Potter Series

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is full of mystery and secrets that are unveiled by the author of the novels. Through a linear plot, the reader follows Harry on his journey through a magical world by experiencing the story through his perspective. However, reading between the lines of Harry's story brings a secondary plotline to the surface. Therefore, Rowling avoids a monological approach to her work, allowing other voices to be heard, like the marginal plot of the Death Eaters. By using Bakhtin's dialogism ideology of multiple perspectives and voices in a novel, and through Rowling's foreshadowing, the knowledge and voices of the Death Eaters are interjected from a subplot into the linear plot in the Harry Potter series.

Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's literary theory, *The Dialogic Imagination*, concentrates on the dialogic and monologic approach in works of literature. Andrew Robinson's article, "In Theory Bakhtin: Dialogism, Polyphony and Heteroglossia," he discusses Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and monologic stories as they are presented in novels and how using one versus the other shapes the structure of the novel. Robinson states: "In a monological novel for instance, characters exist solely to transmit the author's ideology, and the author represents only their idea, not anyone else's" (Robinson 5). Robinson also reveals that Bakhtin views such works as "featureless and flat, marked by a single tone" (Robinson 5). Rowling diverts a "single tone" structure throughout the series by interrupting Harry's linear plot, with the voices and perspectives of the Death Eaters. The dialogism approach as Robinson points out, gives each

character their own final word but also allows for other interjecting views and voices (5). In David Patterson's article "Mikhail Bakhtin and the Dialogical Dimensions of the Novel", he states: "The dialogical dimensions of the novel draw its reader into a dialogical interaction with the novel" (Patterson). He shows that using Bakhtin's idea of dialogical dimension effects how the reader views a novel (Patterson 131). In looking at the marginal plot of the Death Eaters, the reader is drawn into a different dimension than that of Harry's plot, which affects how they may view the novel. In his own work, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin discusses how dialogism impacts the novel: "The novel, however, speculates in what is unknown. The novel devises various forms and methods for employing the surplus knowledge that the author has, that the hero does not know or does not see" (Bakhtin 32). This is true for the Death Eaters because their subplot stands alone behind the scenes of the linear plot, but also interjects into the linear plot, foreshadowing Voldemort's impending return.

This foreshadowing begins in Book One, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, with Severus Snape. When Harry first encounters Snape, the reader witnesses the dark side of this character through Harry: "His eyes were black like Hagrid's, but they had none of Hagrid's warmth. They were cold and empty and made you think of dark tunnels" (SS 136). This description of a dark character gets the reader's attention. As Bakhtin suggests in his concept of dialogism, giving Snape an existing voice in the story brings the marginal plot of the Death Eaters to life. This can be seen through Snape's interaction with Professor Quirrell when he questions him about the Sorcerer's Stone: "We'll have another little chat soon, when you've had time to think things over and decide where your loyalties lie" (SS 226). In Julia Boll's article "Harry Potter's Archetypal Journey", she points out that: "Snape's loyalties and sincerity are often in question" (Boll 90). Since Snape's loyalties throughout the series conflict, it causes the

reader to question where his loyalties truly lie. So, if the reader takes this line of Snape's at face value, then the projecting of Voldemort's return may be overlooked. However, by analyzing this line, the reader can begin to see the knowledge of the Death Eaters subplot interjecting into the linear plot and the knowledge they have about Voldemort. Rowling shows throughout the series that the Death Eaters were very close to Voldemort while he was in power. So, if Snape knows that Voldemort is residing in Professor Quirrell's body, Voldemort can hear every word that Snape says to Quirrell. Snape plays on his loyalty to Voldemort as a Death Eater so that when Voldemort does return, his life may be spared.

Severus Snape is not the only Death Eater to use knowledge as an advantage in this marginal plot. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the reader is introduced to another dark character, Lucius Malfoy. Upon arriving in Diagon Alley, Harry encounters Draco Malfoy, his arch enemy, and his father Lucius. In Rowling's linear plot, Lucius, like Snape, is seen by Harry in the same reference: "The man that followed could only be Draco's father. He had the same pale, pointed face and identical cold, gray eyes" (CoS 50). However, through Rowling's attempt to avoid a monologic approach, the marginalized Death Eater's plot is continuously interjected in this novel through the actions of Ginny Weasley. By Lucius Malfoy planting Tom Riddle's diary on Ginny Weasley, the work of the Death Eaters can easily be accomplished by a young, innocent girl: "Ginny Weasley might have taken all the blame. No one would ever have been able to prove she hadn't acted of her own free will..." (CoS 335-36) At the end of the novel, Dumbledore professes Lucius' intentions:

The Weasleys are one of our most prominent pure-blood families. Imagine the effect on Arthur Weasley and his Muggle Protection Act, if his own daughter was discovered attacking and killing Muggle-borns... Very fortunate the diary was

discovered, and Riddle's memories wiped from it. Who knows what the consequences might have been otherwise... (CoS 336)

Rowling knows that if the reader believes that Lucius' is only trying to bring down Arthur Weasley, then the return of Lord Voldemort will end here. To complicate this issue, Rowling foreshadows his return, through Dumbledore's last line "Who knows what the consequences might have been otherwise" which possibly reveals, that like Snape's knowledge of Quirrell, Lucius has to know the power of the Horcrux and that it is the key to opening the Chamber of Secrets. Otherwise, Lucius would be unaware that Ginny could "attack and kill Muggle-borns" through the power of Riddle's diary. Dobby is therefore written into the linear plot of the novel to warn Harry of the danger that he will encounter at Hogwarts, causing both plots to coexist together in the novel: "There is a plot, Harry Potter. A plot to make most terrible things happen at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry this year." (CoS 16) The only way that Dobby can know about the danger is by overhearing Lucius' plans on using the Horcrux.

Keeping in line with Bakhtin's dialogism idea of multiple voices and perspectives through the Death Eaters, the reader can apply his concept to the text as Rowling continues building on their intrusive plot in Books Three and Four. In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, the newest and most important Death Eater arrives in the plot. Peter Pettigrew, better known as Scabbers until this novel, plays a more casual role throughout the first two books. Rowling foreshadows Pettigrew's arrival with Professor Trelawney's prediction: "HIS SERVANT HAS BEEN CHAINED THESE TWELVE YEARS. TONIGHT, BEFORE MIDNIGHT... THE SERVANT WILL BREAK FREE AND SET OUT TO REJOIN HIS MASTER" (PoA 324). While being a rat and residing with the Weasleys, his marginal plot

allows him to still witness all the dark events that Harry and Ron share throughout the first two novels. While his character is on the back burner, he is able to gather information about Voldemort through Harry and Ron's own encounters, as Sirius Black suggests: "Why else did you find a wizard family to take you in? Keeping an ear out for news weren't you Peter?" (PoA 362) Once Pettigrew bursts into the linear plot as a human, his voice is no longer silent after all these years. Rowling then interweaves both the linear plot of Black and the marginal plot of Pettigrew, briefly bringing them in contact with each other before Pettigrew escapes as Professor Trelawney predicts. Pettigrew then returns to Lord Voldemort, who is residing in the forests of Albania. There they meet up with Barty Crouch Jr and begin preparing for Voldemort's return in the Fourth Book.

Because Pettigrew escapes, the subplot of the Death Eaters interjects into the story line throughout Book Four, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. From the beginning of the novel, the Death Eaters are involved and active. They are not the main focus however; the linear plot still lies with Harry Potter. The importance of the Death Eaters, including Pettigrew, or better known as Wormtail, is evident in the first chapter: "Wormtail, I will allow you to perform an essential task for me, one that many of my followers would give their right hands to perform..." (GoF 11), which is also a foreshadowing of Pettigrew's sacrificial hand during Voldemort's return. After the scene dies off, Rowling places the reader right back into Harry's plot.

In Book Four, Rowling gives the reader, as well as Harry, a glimpse into the subplot of the Death Eaters, who they are, and their purpose. This begins Harry's learning of not only the Death Eaters, but Voldemort as well. After thirteen years of lying low, the Death Eater's subplot begins to force its way into Harry's plot like during the Quiddich World Cup. In this chapter, Rowling introduces Harry and the reader to the Death Eaters:

“Death Eaters?” said Harry. “What are Death Eaters?”

“It’s what You-Know-Who’s supporters called themselves,” said Bill.(GoF 142).

In allowing the Death Eaters to be active at the World Cup and witnessing the Dark Mark, Rowling builds on the dreaded anticipation of Voldemort’s return from both the wizard world and the Death Eaters themselves.

By the time of the Yule Ball, the reader is alert to the presence of Voldemort. Rowling’s foreshadowing of his return becomes more evident through Death Eaters such as Karkaroff and Snape when she allows Harry and Ron to overhear their conversation:

“Severus, you cannot pretend this isn’t happening!” Karkaroff’s voice sounded anxious and hushed, as though keen not to be overheard. “It’s been getting clearer and clearer for months. I am becoming seriously concerned, I can’t deny it—“

“Then flee” said Snape’s voice curtly. “Flee—I will make your excuse. I, however, am remaining at Hogwarts” (GoF 426)

Like Snape and Karkaroff, other Death Eaters can feel the presence of their powerful leader through his mark upon their arms. When it comes time for the Death Eaters to finally answer to Lord Voldemort upon his return, their marginal story line now becomes part of Harry’s linear plot. Lord Voldemort talks about how disappointed he is that none of his Death Eaters came to his rescue: “and I ask myself—why did this band of wizards never come to the aid of their master, to whom they swore eternal loyalty?” (GoF 647) Each one of the Death Eaters present takes the defense that there were no signs or clues that he was returning, but if the reader looks closely to their marginal plot of foreshadowing through the first four books, they can see

that Rowling proves them wrong in their defense. Their subplot suggests that the whole time they knew and now must suffer Voldemort's wrath.

Voice, according to Bakhtin, is "the speaking consciousness," and that in a novel, "Prose tropes by contrast always contain more than one voice" (Bakhtin 434). In other words, voice is the speaking consciousness of the characters throughout the novel, and that the typical novel always contains more than one voice. Tahir Wood points out in his article "Cognitive processes in text Interpretation: Rereading Bakhtin," that Bakhtin sees "voice" as a character as well as a linguistic code and that the two must be understood together in the novel. (Wood 35) This can be seen throughout not only the first four books in the Harry Potter series but especially in the last three books. Harry, who is the narrator from Book One, now has the invading enemy to deal with through his own plot in the story. By bringing Lord Voldemort to power, his once marginal plot line now becomes parallel to Harry's linear plot. The wrath that Voldemort imposes throughout the story tries to overshadow the Death Eater's subplot, not only through his voice but through his character as well. In an online *Los Angeles Times* interview, titled "Harry Potter"; Jason Isaacs says Draco Malfoy is 'the hero of the whole saga,' Isaacs, who plays Lucius Malfoy, states: "weakness is leprous in the Death Eater world" (Isaacs 5 qtd. In Clark). Voldemort silences those characters or voices that he portrays as weak, like Pettigrew and Lucius.

Pettigrew is weak from the beginning of his entrance in Book Three, but because Voldemort needs a servant in order to return to power, he keeps Pettigrew as his right hand man. The spell and potion that requires Lord Voldemort's soul to return to bodily form includes the sacrifice of Pettigrew's right arm, which Rowling foreshadows in Book Four. In light of his loyalty, Voldemort replaces his arm with a new mechanical one. Pettigrew remains in the subplot

with the other Death Eaters and is briefly heard from in Books Five and Six. However, in Book Seven, Pettigrew's marginal plot emerges into Harry's linear plot when he attempts to kill Harry:

“You're going to kill me?” Harry choked, attempting to prise off the metal fingers. “After I saved your life? You owe me, Wormtail!”

“The silver fingers slackened...He seemed just as shocked as Harry at what his hand had done, at the tiny, merciful impulse it had betrayed, and he continued to struggle more powerfully, as though to undo that moment of weakness” (DH 470)

The arm, Voldemort's creation, views this as a sign of weakness and silences Pettigrew from both the secondary plot of the Death Eaters and Harry's linear plot: “Wandless, and helpless, Pettigrew's pupils dilated in terror. His eyes had slid from Harry's face to something else. His own silver fingers were moving inexorably toward his own throat.” (DH 470)

Pettigrew is not the only Death Eater that suffers Voldemort's wrath from signs of weakness. When the Ministry captures Lucius and his fellow Death Eater's at the end of *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Voldemort must come to their rescue. To Voldemort, this is weakness and must be taken care of. Like Pettigrew, Lucius must pay for his weakness. In his interview Isaacs shows how Voldemort deals with Lucius's moment of weakness:

“Voldemort takes my wand and snaps it, and un-mans me, castrates me, basically, in front of the rest of the Death Eaters, I'm done for. You just watch the slow collapse of a human being.” (Isaacs 5 qtd. In Clark).

Lucius, who places himself on a pedestal of higher status than most in society throughout the first half of this series, finds his voice silenced by Voldemort. He becomes the mere shell of



the Death Eater he once was. However, in continuing to avoid a monologic approach in the novels, Rowling interjects new voices and perspectives from the Death Eater's subplot into the linear plot with the use of foreshadowing through such characters as Draco Malfoy, Narcissa Malfoy, and Bellatrix Lestrange.

Lucius' silent voice creates an opening within the Death Eater world. Not only does Voldemort make Lucius pay for his weakness by disarming him, but he also now recruits Draco to fill this opening. Throughout the entire series, Draco's plot, like the Death Eater's plot, is marginal but important. Draco's character is present from Book One, and like the Death Eater's subplot, his subplot interjects into Harry's linear plot, revealing, that like his father, he views those that are different as less than desirable in high society. By Book Four, the reader experiences Draco's knowledge of the Death Eaters during the Quiddich World Cup:

“Scare easily, don't they?” he said lazily. “I suppose your daddy told you all to hide? What's he up to—trying to rescue the Muggles?”

“Where're your parents?” said Harry, his temper rising. “Out there wearing masks, are they?”

“Malfoy turned his face to Harry, still smiling.” (GoF 122)

Draco, unlike everyone else who is in panic mode during this scene, is truly enjoying the abuse of the Muggles. Referring back to Bakhtin's ideology of the “unknowing hero,” the reader can see Rowling's attempt through foreshadowing to reveal Draco as a future Death Eater, which at this time Harry does not notice. In his interview, Isaacs offers some insight to Draco's character when asked about Lucius' relationship with his son:

“But Draco has a bunch of choices, and Draco has to break the bonds of the shackles of his past. He has to break the chain of this kind of abuse and hatred and selfishness and entitlement that his father has been part of, and his grandfather and stretching back for generations. And so I saw my job as trying to illustrate how you end up with a kid as messed up as Draco.” (Isaacs 4 qtd. In Clark)

Realizing the importance of Draco’s marginal plot, Rowling shows the reader his struggles with such choices in *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*. One of those choices is whether or not to perform a task that Voldemort requests of Draco alone. Draco struggles with this task throughout the entire novel: “No one can help me,” said Malfoy. His whole body was shaking. “I can’t do it...I can’t...It won’t work...and unless I do it soon...he says he’ll kill me.” (HBP 522).

Since Draco is only a child, Rowling introduced two new voices into the Death Eater’s marginal plot, Draco’s mother, Narcissa, and his aunt, Bellatrix. In doing so, Bakhtin’s theory of the “unknown hero” and dialogism thoroughly applies to these two new voices and perspectives in the story. In one voice, there is the mother fighting for her son: “Severus,” she whispered, tears sliding down her pale cheeks. “My son...my only son...” (HBP 33). The other voice offers the reader the perspective of a loyal Death Eater:

“Draco should be proud,” said Bellatrix indifferently. “The Dark Lord is granting him a great honor. And I will say this for Draco: He isn’t shrinking away from his duty, he seems glad of a chance to prove himself, excited at the prospect—” (HBP 33).

Knowing that he is too young, Narcissa's voice interjects into the linear plot on behalf of Draco: "That's because he is sixteen and has no idea what lies in store! Why, Severus? Why my son? It is too dangerous! This is vengeance for Lucius's mistake, I know it!" (HBP 33).

From the beginning of the book, the reader knows information that Harry does not. Through the voices of both Narcissa and Bellatrix, Rowling foreshadows Draco's imminent task ahead that plagues him throughout the book. This foreshadowing hides what Draco's task is, but the reader is aware that it is something so dangerous that the protective use of the Unbreakable Vow is made between the caring mother and the protector, Snape. Similar to Voldemort's return in Book Four, this "unknowing hero" event causes the Death Eater's marginal plot to force its way into Harry's linear plot at the end of the novel, when Draco must kill Dumbledore. However, because Draco's subplot interjects into Harry's plot, towards the beginning of the book, in Diagon Alley, Harry himself begins to question Rowling's foreshadowing when he suspects that Draco is now a Death Eater: "He's a Death Eater," said Harry slowly. "He's replaced his father as a Death Eater!" (HBP 130).

To keep Harry as well as the reader guessing, Rowling plays with this line of foreshadowing and realization throughout Book Six, which allows for the other voices in the linear plot, like Dumbledore, Hermione, Ron, and members of the Order, to deny what Harry and the reader may already know. In letting these characters deny what Harry is trying to prove, Rowling is able to keep the knowledge of Draco, the Death Eater, in the marginal plot throughout the novel. Therefore, Harry's linear plot must intertwine with Draco's plot in order for him to witness Draco's task, answering his own questions of Rowling's foreshadowing he has from early on in the book.

Draco's subplot is not the only Death Eater subplot to intertwine with Harry's. Severus Snape's subplot, like Draco's, is present from the beginning. Also like Draco's, Rowling plays with the foreshadowing of Snape's plot, revealing the knowledge he has about both sides, good and evil. Harry, who has his doubts about Snape from the beginning of Book One, realizes why when Dumbledore introduces him to the Pensive in Book Four:

"I have given evidence already on this matter," he said calmly. "Severus Snape was indeed a Death Eater. However, he rejoined our side before Lord Voldemort's downfall and turned spy for us, at a great personal risk. He is now no more a Death Eater than I am." (GoF 590-91)

By briefly introducing the Pensive and Legilimency in Book Four, Rowling foreshadows the methods in which Harry learns about Snape in future books. As soon as Harry arrives at Grimmauld Place at beginning of *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, the Death Eaters are present within Harry's linear plot when Ron informs Harry about the Order: "We know some of the Order are following known Death Eaters, keeping tabs on them," (OP 67).

Later in Book Five, Harry's scar becomes a gateway of control for Voldemort and Harry both. Harry is able to see into Voldemort's mind, which Voldemort is unaware of in the beginning as Snape points out: "—you are sharing the Dark Lord's thoughts and emotions." (OP 531).

Knowing this is problematic, Dumbledore assigns Occlumency lessons for Harry with Professor Snape. Knowing about his Death Eater past, Harry envelopes a deeper lack of trust with Snape. Rowling plays on this lack of trust to keep Snape as the bad guy throughout the remainder of the series. However, in Book Five, Rowling continuously interjects Snape's

marginal plot into Harry's linear plot, avoiding a monologic structure. By giving Harry and the reader a glimpse into Snape's secret world, both are able to sympathize with Snape during one of Harry's Occlumency lessons:

“—it was that he knew how it felt to be humiliated in the middle of a circle of onlookers, knew exactly how Snape had felt as his father had taunted him, and that judging from what he had just seen, his father had been every bit as arrogant as Snape had always told him.” (OP 650)

Since Rowling only interjects Snape's marginal plot, she can keep his knowledge of both his Death Eater loyalty and his Dumbledore loyalty hidden, allowing for the sympathy to die off before his next interjection into the linear plot. For instance, by the end of *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, Harry's distrust only grows after Snape performs the task Draco could not: “Snape killed Dumbledore,” said Harry. In this very line from Harry, all characters as well as the hero are unaware of Rowling's intended foreshadowing which she reveals through characters like Professor McGonagall: “Snape,” repeated McGonagall faintly, falling into the chair. “We all wondered...but he trusted...always...*Snape*...I can't believe it...” (HBP 615),

Nilsen, Nilsen, Donelson, and Blasingame highlight in their book *Literature for Today's Young Adults* that a happy ending is only achieved after the hero has overcome a crisis. The suffering in the story allows the hero to gain a type of wisdom even if he never intended to do so (Nilsen, Nilsen, Donelson, and Blasingame). This is true for Harry, upon his final encounter with Snape in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. By applying Bakhtin's dialogism of voices within the novel, the reader can see how just as Rowling begins the series with the intruding marginal plot of the Death Eaters, she also ends their marginal plot through Snape's last

memory. The knowledge of the Snape, the Death Eater Harry despises most, gives him the wisdom he needs to defeat his true enemy:

“Finally the truth. Lying with his face pressed into the dust carpet of the office where he had once thought he was learning the secrets of victory, Harry understood at last that he was not supposed to survive. His job was to walk calmly into Death’s welcoming arms. Along the way, he was to dispose of Voldemort’s remaining links to lie, so that when at last he flung himself across Voldemort’s path, and did not raise a wand to defend himself, the end would be clean and the job that ought to have been done in Godric’s Hallow would be finished: Neither would life, neither could survive.” (DH 691)

Reading between the lines offers an exploration to the marginal plots of characters such as Snape, Lucius, and Pettigrew in the *Harry Potter* series, highlighting the importance of their plot. Bakhtin’s dialogism ideology helps explain Rowling’s books by bringing in the perspectives and voices of the Death Eaters, allowing the dialogical dimensions of the novel to draw in the reader, as both Patterson and Robinson reveal in their articles. In avoiding a monologic structure, Rowling interjects their marginal plot into the story through foreshadowing, building both plot lines. With Voldemort’s return at the end of Book Four, Rowling brings both coexisting plots together, creating a new linear plot for Harry in future books. In this new linear plot, Voldemort’s plot is parallel with Harry’s, forcing the Death Eater’s marginal plot to interrupt the main story, through Rowling’s foreshadowing. In doing so, the reader can apply Bakhtin’s definition of voice to the Death Eaters, showing that there is more than one voice in the novel. As Wood notes in his article, Bakhtin also sees these voices as characters, not just linguistics. Once Voldemort silences his weaker Death Eaters, the voices of new Death Eaters

emerge into the linear plot through such character as Draco, Narcissa, and Bellatrix. The intertwining of Harry, Draco, and Snape's plots allows for Harry as well as the reader to acquire the knowledge of the Death Eaters through their protruding subplot in the Harry Potter series. This knowledge that Rowling foreshadows throughout the series about their infamous leader gives Harry the Power to bring down Voldemort in the end, giving the story it's true happy ending.

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