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# “I saw it all from the snake’s point of view” – Slithering through exceptions in focalisation in the *Harry Potter* novels

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## Introduction

- 1 The plot of the *Harry Potter* saga, which is divided into seven novels, revolves around Harry Potter, a young wizard who was raised by his non-magical relatives because his parents were killed by Voldemort, the Dark Lord. Voldemort also tried to kill Harry, but he failed and only left a scar on Harry’s forehead to then disappear and be presumed dead. The whole saga is about Harry’s discovery of the magical world and his participation in the fight against dark magic and Voldemort, whose spirit survived because he had created Horcruxes – magical objects in which he had concealed parts of his soul in the hope of becoming immortal. The magical connection between the two characters, which is outlined from the first volume onwards, is accounted for at the end of *HP7*: when Voldemort tried to kill Harry and his physical body was destroyed, the part of Voldemort’s soul that lived in him attached to the only living thing that was in the room – Harry. Harry is therefore a Horcrux as a part of Voldemort’s soul lives in him.
- 2 Stylistically, this magical connection is partly echoed in the choice of narrative viewpoint/focalisation. Leech and Short (2007, 140) define fictional point of view (or focalisation) as “a selective withholding of information, or relinquishing of omniscience”. They take a view according to which the narrator/author is necessarily omniscient but may choose to limit that omniscience. Leech and Short (2007, 140):

A fiction writer, although not compelled to take one person’s point of view, can voluntarily limit his ‘omniscience’ to those things which belong to one person’s model of reality. He can also vary the fictional point of view, sometimes claiming

authorial omniscience, sometimes giving us one character's vision of events, sometimes that of another. He can even take the point of view of an animal, or of a man on the point of death, bypassing the problem of authenticity: how could such an account have been told to anybody?

- 3 This quotation raises two points that are essential to this paper: first, it breaks down the distinction between author and narrator – this distinction is often problematic in third-person narrations (Leech and Short, 2007, 213-214), but here Leech and Short seem to extend this superimposition to all types of narrations; second, it acknowledges the fluidity of narrative modes, blurring the divisions between Genette's variable internal focalisation and zero (or omniscient) focalisation. This view seems fitting in the case of *Harry Potter*. The general narrative pattern is that of a hetero-extradiegetic narration in Genette's (1972) terminology: the narrator is not identified or named and Harry is the main focaliser but he is not the narrator. In other words, the traditional narratological roles of real author, implied author and heterodiegetic narrator merge and give rise to what has sometimes been called "narrauthor" (Lokrantz, 1973)<sup>1</sup>. The narrauthor tells the saga through a third-person narration alternating between omniscient passages and passages in which they limit their omniscience and choose Harry as a focaliser. But this general pattern is sometimes left aside and gives way to exceptions in focalisation which carry several functions in the saga.
- 4 These exceptions are the focus of this paper, which intends to slither between major narrative tendencies and micro-analyses in order to deconstruct the narrauthor's manipulation<sup>2</sup> in the *Harry Potter* novels. We will show that, having established the reader's trust in Harry as the main reflector in the novels, the author claims control over the narrative thanks to exceptions to this general pattern, which allows her both to foreshadow and to maintain the suspense over the revelation of the final plot twist.

## General narrative pattern in the novels: pushing in and popping out of focus

### Deictic pushes and pops (Deictic Shift Theory)

- 5 The alternation between an omniscient narratorial mode and focalisation through Harry can be explained thanks to *Deictic Shift Theory*. This theory, developed by Galbraith (1995) and widely used afterwards within the frame of cognitive stylistics, and more specifically in *Text-World Theory*, mostly by Stockwell (2002), Gavins (2007) and McIntyre (2007), considers changes in narratorial modes in terms of *deictic shifts*. Deictic shifts can be defined as changes in deictic centre – usually the character from which everything is perceived –, and deictic field – all the deictic elements that are associated with the deictic centre. Deictic shifts can be divided into *deictic pushes* and *deictic pops*<sup>3</sup>. Stockwell (2005, 47-48) defines these concepts as follows:

When a deictic shift occurs, it can be either 'up' or 'down' the virtual planes of deictic fields. In other words, a novel which begins with the deictic field centred on a narrator might shift its deictic centre 'down' to a point earlier in the narrator's life (shifting deictic centre on the basis largely of the temporal dimension), or to a different spatial location, or even to the deictic centre of a character in the novel (with perceptual deixis prominent). Borrowing a term from computer science, this type of deictic shift is a push. [...] Entering flashbacks, dreams, plays with plays, stories told by characters, reproduced letters of diary entries, or considering

unrealised possibilities inside the minds of characters are all examples of pushing into a deictic field.

By contrast, moving up a level is a pop [...]. You can pop out of a deictic field by putting a book down and shifting your centre back to your real life as real reader. Within a text, you can pop up a level if the narrator appears again at the end to wrap up the narrative, or if the narrator interjects opinion or external comment at any point within the narrative. These involve shifts from the character who is the current focus of attention up to the deictic centre of the narrator.

- 6 When the narration shifts from omniscient mode to focalisation through Harry, it feels as though the narrator were zooming on Harry and adopting his point of view: this is a deictic push into a particular deictic field, that of Harry's, who becomes the deictic centre from which everything is perceived. This phenomenon can be observed almost systematically in the first chapters of the *Harry Potter* novels, as is the case in the following example (*HP3*, ch.1 (1)):

**Harry Potter**<sup>4</sup> was a highly unusual boy in many ways. For one thing, **he hated** the summer holidays more than any other time of the year. For another, **he really wanted** to do his homework, but was forced to do it in secret, in the dead of night. And he also happened to be a wizard.

- 7 This deictic push is made obvious by the shift from using his full name ("Harry Potter") to quickly giving access to his inner feelings ("he hated the summer", "he really wanted to do his homework"). There is a cinematographic effect to this zooming phenomenon, which is reproduced in the filmic adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.
- 8 Deictic pops can be found as well, producing a de-zooming effect. Unsurprisingly, they occur at the end of some chapters or novels, when the narration takes a step back to show a panoramic vision of events and to conclude a story. It is the case, for instance, in the last chapter of *HP2* when Harry and his friends go home for the summer; Harry ceases to be the main focaliser and his vision is replaced by an external or omniscient narrative mode (*HP2*, ch.18 (359-60)):

They were almost at King's Cross when Harry **remembered** something.  
 "Ginny - what did you see Percy doing, that he didn't want you to tell anyone?"  
 "Oh, that," said Ginny, giggling. "Well - Percy's got a girlfriend." Fred dropped a stack of books on George's head.  
 "What?"  
 "It's that Ravenclaw prefect, Penelope Clearwater," said Ginny. "That's who he was writing to all last summer. He's been meeting her all over the school in secret. I walked in on them kissing in an empty classroom one day. He was so upset when she was - you know - attacked. You won't tease him, will you?" she added anxiously.  
 "Wouldn't dream of it," said Fred, who was looking like his birthday had come early.  
 "Definitely not," said George, sniggering.  
 The Hogwarts Express slowed and finally stopped.  
 Harry pulled out his quill and a bit of parchment and turned to Ron and Hermione.  
 "This is called a telephone number," he told Ron, scribbling it twice, tearing the parchment in two, and handing it to them. "I told your dad how to use a telephone last summer - he'll know. Call me at the Dursleys', okay? I can't stand another two months with only Dudley to talk to..." "Your aunt and uncle will be proud, though, won't they?" said Hermione as they got off the train and joined the crowd thronging toward the enchanted barrier. "When they hear what you did this year?"  
 "Proud?" said Harry. "Are you crazy? All those times I could've died, and I didn't manage it? They'll be furious..."  
**And together they walked back through the gateway to the Muggle world.**

- 9 The gradual shift from Harry's perception ("They were almost at King's Cross when Harry remembered something.") to a panoramic vision in the last sentence ("And together they walked back through the gateway to the Muggle<sup>5</sup> world.") concludes the novel with the opposite cinematographic effect to that shown in the previous example.
- 10 In spite of this alternation between deictic pushes and pops, focalisation through Harry clearly dominates in almost each chapter of the seven novels.

### Harry: a privileged reflector

- 11 Thanks to the fantastic mode, the alternation between deictic pushes and pops is even taken to an extreme with many plays on memory and the mind. For instance, Albus Dumbledore owns a useful object called a Pensieve, which allows him to relieve his mind of his memories. In the course of the novels, several episodes can be assimilated to deictic pushes during which Harry delves into the Pensieve and has access to Dumbledore's or other people's memories. Interestingly, these episodes are focalised through Harry, who remains the deictic centre; this suggests that once a memory is extracted from someone's mind, it ceases to belong to that person (*HP4*, ch.30 (492-504)):

The tip of his nose touched the strange substance into which he was staring.

**Dumbledore's office gave an almighty lurch – Harry was thrown forward and pitched headfirst into the substance inside the basin –**

But his head did not hit the stone bottom. He was falling through something icy – cold and black; it was like being sucked into a dark whirlpool –

And suddenly, Harry found himself sitting on a bench at the end of the room inside the basin, a bench raised high above the others. He looked up at the high stone ceiling, expecting to see the circular window through which he had just been staring, but there was nothing there but dark, solid stone. [...]

He was sitting right next to Albus Dumbledore.

Harry raised his right hand, hesitated, and then waved it energetically in front of Dumbledore's face. Dumbledore did not blink, look around at Harry, or indeed move at all. And that, in Harry's opinion, settled the matter. Dumbledore wouldn't ignore him like that. **He was inside a memory, and this was not the present-day Dumbledore.** [...] Before Harry could reach any conclusions about the place in which they were, he **heard** footsteps. The door in the corner of the dungeon opened and three people entered – or at least one man, flanked by two dementors.

[...]

Harry looked down at the man now sitting in the chair and **saw** that it was Karkaroff.

- 12 Since these memories are, quite logically, focalised *on* the person who lived those moments, Harry is merely a guest in them, which means that he can see what happened but cannot see outside that person's field of vision or sensation. This is made clear in the following example in *HP5*, ch.29 (594), when Harry accesses Snape's memories and wants to follow his father:

Harry looked anxiously behind him again. Snape remained close by, still buried in his examination questions; but this was Snape's memory, and **Harry was sure that if Snape chose to wander off in a different direction once outside in the grounds, he, Harry, would not be able to follow James any farther.**

- 13 Harry can only see what belongs to Snape's memory and he realises that he cannot access events that took place in the past but in which his professor did not take part. Similarly, at one point when Harry takes Occlumency lessons with Professor Snape in

order not to let anyone access his own memories, he manages to stop Snape from reading his mind and finds himself accessing his. This passage (*HP5*, ch.26 (546)) is once again focalised through Harry:

He raised his wand. "One – two – three – *Legilimens!*"

A hundred dementors were swooping **toward Harry** across the lake in the grounds... He screwed up his face in concentration... They were **coming closer**... He **could see** the dark holes beneath their hoods... yet he **could also see** Snape standing **in front of him**, his eyes fixed upon Harry's face, muttering under his breath... And somehow, Snape was growing clearer, and the dementors were growing fainter...

Harry raised his own wand.

"*Protego!*"

**Snape staggered; his wand flew upward, away from Harry – and suddenly Harry's mind was teeming with memories that were not his – a hook-nosed man was shouting at a cowering woman, while a small dark-haired boy cried in a corner... A greasy-haired teenager sat alone in a dark bedroom, pointing his wand at the ceiling, shooting down flies... A girl was laughing as a scrawny boy tried to mount a bucking broomstick –**

"ENOUGH!"

- 14 Interestingly, in this example, although Harry remains the focaliser, there seems to be a deictic pop. Harry is clearly the deictic centre in the first half of the example: he is the one who sees ("he could see", "he could also see") and the point from which movement is perceived ("swooping toward Harry", "coming closer"), but he is no longer expressly shown as such in the second one where he seems to be watching Snape's memory as an external witness in an unidentified place, as the recurrent use of the indefinite articles shows ("a hook-nosed man", "a cowering woman", "a small dark-haired boy", "a corner", etc.). Still, the memory is not narrated from Snape's point of view. Harry is the main reflector in the novels, and therefore the main source of information. As a result, the reader – especially the child reader<sup>6</sup> – develops a strong sense of trust in what Harry sees and perceives. However, these passages also show that one's thoughts and memories are not inherently one's own property: they can be stolen, shown to someone else, and even manipulated and tampered with. For instance, in *HP2*, Voldemort uses his memories to manipulate Ginny Weasley into reopening the Chamber of Secrets and in *HP6* Professor Slughorn is discovered to have altered one of his memories in order to hide his incidental role in Voldemort's evil scheme. Therefore, the experienced reader may already perceive that something is amiss.
- 15 This main narrative pattern shows an almighty narrauthor who claims their omniscience and omnipotence and uses it to their story's end: the narrauthor chooses whatever narrative mode is necessary for the reader to have just the amount of information they want to reveal to them. In this clever manipulative narrative mode, the general pattern of alternation is therefore sometimes left aside, and exceptions in focalisation are very much foregrounded and used as a means to an end.

## Incipits as exceptional chapters

### Exceptions in focalisation as a means to frame the narration

- 16 There are a few exceptions in focalisation throughout the novels, but these fulfil specific roles, and subpatterns arise. The incipits of *HP2*, *HP3*, or *HP5* start with an

omniscient narrator who gives Harry the role of the main reflector after a few lines. In *HP1*, *HP4*, *HP6* and *HP7*, on the other hand, Harry is not even part of the incipits. The very first chapter of the *Harry Potter* novels, which takes place when Harry is just a baby, stands out:

Mr and Mrs Dursley of number four, Privet Drive, were **proud** to say that they were perfectly normal, **thank you very much**.

- 17 The first sentence seems to be anchored in the deictic field of the Dursleys (Harry's relatives), as suggested by the presence of the evaluative adjective "proud" in the narrative report of speech act and of Free Direct Speech ("thank you very much"). Free Direct Speech, however, indicates the superposition of this deictic field with that of the narrator since it is embedded in what seems to be Narrative Report of Speech Act ("they were proud to say that they were perfectly normal"). Indeed, a few lines further, there is a deictic pop into the deictic field of the omniscient narrator, who clearly notifies the reader of their presence, which suggests that there was a blur between the voice of the narrator and that of the Dursleys in the very first sentence (*HP1*, ch.1 (2)):

When Mr and Mrs Dursley woke up **on the dull, grey Tuesday our story starts**, there was nothing about the cloudy sky outside to suggest that strange and **mysterious things would soon be happening** all over the country.

- 18 The rest of the chapter then uses Mr Dursley as a reflector before popping back into the deictic field of the narrator, who claims authorial omniscience while carefully choosing the information they give to the reader (*HP1*, ch. 1 (9-10)):

His blue eyes were light, bright, and sparkling behind half-moon spectacles and his nose was very long and crooked, as though it had been broken at least twice. **This man's name was Albus Dumbledore**.

- 19 All incipits in the saga are built on one of the following models: either incipits in omniscient focalisation and/or which are focalised by someone other than Harry, who is not part of it, or incipits which start with omniscient focalisation and in which the narrator briefly explains the context before making Harry the main focaliser thanks to a deictic push. Those chapters work as frames and they create a sense of expectation and familiarity in the reader. However, they remain exceptional as they are the only ones in which Harry is not the main focaliser.
- 20 Unsurprisingly, the incipits often fulfil an informative function, since the reader does not know what happened between the end of the school year and the beginning of the next one. This is exemplified in *HP6*, ch.3 (32-37)<sup>7</sup>, in which the omniscient narrator describes Harry, who is asleep in his room, before giving the reader access to the headlines of the newspapers that are on the desk. The summer between *HP5* and *HP6* is the summer when Voldemort and his followers stopped hiding and multiplied attacks and when the rebellion and the Ministry of Magic both unsuccessfully tried to fight Voldemort. Much of this information is lost to the reader, especially since Harry has spent the entire summer in the non-magical world. As is the case in the other incipits of the saga, the narrator gives us access to Harry's intimate thoughts before he wakes up, thanks to a deictic push into Harry's deictic field. The narrator is manipulative because they carefully select the information they give to the reader (*HP6*, ch.3 (34)):

*Most seem reassured by the new Minister's tough stand on student safety. Said Mrs. Augusta Longbottom, "My grandson, Neville - a good friend of Harry Potter's, incidentally, who fought the Death Eaters alongside him at the Ministry in June and -*

But the rest of this story was obscured by the large birdcage standing on top of it. Inside it was a magnificent snowy owl. Her amber eyes surveyed the room imperiously, her head swivelling occasionally to gaze at her snoring master.

- 21 The narrator refuses to give the reader access to the end of the newspaper article, but describes Harry's owl, Hedwig, as though it was mentioned for the first time, when it has in fact accompanied Harry since *HP1*: they retain the useful, unknown information and divert the reader's attention by providing useless, known information.
- 22 The absence of Harry in the first two chapters of *HP6* is particularly salient for it is the only volume in which the mention of the hero is delayed for so long. Chapter 1, which starts with an omniscient narration and continues with a deictic push into the Muggle Prime Minister's deictic field, has an informative function, but it also creates links between the magical world and the non-magical world as the Muggle Prime Minister meets with the Minister of Magic<sup>8</sup>. It is one of the rare chapters in the saga in which there is no deictic push from the omniscient narrator to Harry, but to another character. Chapter 2 stands out even more as there is no deictic push into a character's deictic field and therefore no main reflector; it gives access to information that Harry does not have but mainly participates in the construction of dramatic irony. The narrator merely describes the scene and withholds information from the reader – for example, the fact that Draco's secret mission is to kill Dumbledore and that Snape made the unbreakable vow to kill Dumbledore instead of Draco, should the latter fail to his mission (*HP6*, ch.2 (31)):

"And, should it prove necessary... if it seems Draco will fail..." whispered Narcissa (Snape's hand twitched within hers, but he did not draw away), "will you carry out the deed that the Dark Lord has ordered Draco to perform?"

There was a moment's silence. Bellatrix watched, her wand upon their clasped hands, her eyes wide.

"I will," said Snape.

Bellatrix's astounded face glowed red in the blaze of a third tongue of flame, which shot from the wand, twisted with the others, and bound itself thickly around their clasped hands, like a rope, like a fiery snake.

- 23 Although those incipits stand out at the macrostructural level, the manifest presence of the omniscient narrator in the incipit of *HP1* sets the tone so that the reader is familiar with it from the very beginning.

### ***HP4*, a turning point in the saga**

- 24 *HP4* clearly marks an unsettling turning point in the series: it is the middle volume in the saga, and it marks the return of Lord Voldemort. The first chapter of *HP4* unsurprisingly starts with omniscient focalisation (*HP4*, ch.1 (1)):

The villagers of Little Hangleton still called it "the Riddle House," even though it had been many years since the Riddle family had lived there. It stood on a hill overlooking the village, some of its windows boarded, tiles missing from its roof, and ivy spreading unchecked over its face. Once a fine-looking manor, and easily the largest and grandest building for miles around, the Riddle House was now damp, derelict, and unoccupied.

The Little Hangletons all agreed that the old house was "creepy." Half a century ago, something strange and horrible had happened there, something that the older inhabitants of the village still liked to discuss when topics for gossip were scarce.

- 25 A typographic blank on page 4 indicates a shift from a deictic field reporting events that happened half a century ago to a present-time deictic field, starting with a focus

on Frank Bryce – a character who was not mentioned in any of the previous books and who dies at the end of this chapter. A few lines further, the narrative mode shifts with a deictic push from omniscient to focalisation through Frank Bryce. The interest of this scene is made clear on page 6 when the reader starts suspecting that Frank Bryce may be attending a meeting between Voldemort and one of his servants. The chapter closes on the following lines (*HP4*, ch.1 (13)):

And then the chair was facing Frank, and he **saw** what was sitting in it. His walking stick fell to the floor with a clatter. He opened his mouth and let out a scream. He was screaming so loudly that he never **heard** the words the thing in the chair spoke as it raised a wand. There was a flash of green light, a rushing sound, and **Frank Bryce crumpled. He was dead before he hit the floor.**

**Two hundred miles away, the boy called Harry Potter woke with a start.**

- 26 Chapter 1 ends with a deictic pop back into the omniscient narrator's deictic field, and chapter 2 opens on a deictic push on Harry, now the deictic centre again, who tries to remember the scene (*HP4*, ch.2 (14-15)):

Harry ran his fingers over the scar again. It was still painful. He turned on the lamp beside him, scrambled out of bed, crossed the room, opened his wardrobe, and peered into the mirror on the inside of the door. A skinny boy of fourteen looked back at him, his bright green eyes puzzled under his untidy black hair. He examined the lightning-bolt scar of his reflection more closely. It looked normal, but it was still stinging.

**Harry tried to recall what he had been dreaming about before he had awoken. It had seemed so real... There had been two people he knew and one he didn't... He concentrated hard, frowning, trying to remember...**

The dim picture of a darkened room came to him... There had been a snake on a hearth rug... a small man called Peter, nicknamed Wormtail... and a cold, high voice... the voice of Lord Voldemort. Harry felt as though an ice cube had slipped down into his stomach at the very thought...

He closed his eyes tightly and tried to remember what Voldemort had looked like, but it was impossible... All Harry knew was that at the moment when Voldemort's chair had swung around, and he, Harry, had seen what was sitting in it, he had felt a spasm of horror, which had awoken him... or had that been the pain in his scar?

And who had the old man been? For there had definitely been an old man; Harry had watched him fall to the ground. **It was all becoming confused.**

- 27 The link between chapter 1 and chapter 2 seems unclear to both Harry and the reader, who find themselves in an unfamiliar environment; although chapter 1 does not seem to be narrating a dream, when Harry becomes the main focaliser and the deictic centre, he seems to recall the scene in chapter 1 as a dream, in an embedded deictic push. It is however very unclear how much he has seen, and he cannot remember much as his memories get confused when he wakes up. The existence of a connection between Harry's and Voldemort's minds has been suggested since *HP1*. However, this is the first time that a deictic push has not been equated with a sort of time travel (as opposed to what the Pensieve and occlumency allow), since the embedded dream is a vision of a scene actually happening in co-occurrence with the main narrative. Indeed, at the macrostructural level, as the plot unfolds, the mental connection between Harry and Voldemort grows, the scar goes from prickling to hurting, while the strange dreams become visions about Voldemort's actions, feelings, and memories.
- 28 This first dream in *HP4* announces, on the one hand, the events of the end of *HP4* (the physical return of Lord Voldemort) and, on the other hand, the growing connection between Harry and Voldemort and the final plot twist – the fact that Harry is a Horcrux

and that a part of Voldemort lives in him. Although this revelation only occurs at the very end of the saga, it is foreshadowed by more or less discrete hints which have been scattered from the first volume onwards. Those hints go from diegetic clues to stylistic elements, namely exceptions in focalisation, through which the reader has to slither.

## The merger of focalisation: exceptions foreshadowing the final plot twist

### Merging deictic centres: a climactic and revelatory narrative tool

- 29 In *HP5*, in a chapter cunningly entitled "The eye of the snake" (*HP5*, ch.21 (427-428)), Harry has a most disturbing vision:

**His body felt smooth, powerful, and flexible. He was gliding** between shining metal bars, across dark, cold stone... **He was flat against the floor, sliding along on his belly...** It was dark, yet **he could see** objects around him shimmering in strange, vibrant colours... He was turning his head... At first glance, the corridor was empty... but no... a man was sitting on the floor ahead, his chin drooping onto his chest, his outline gleaming in the dark...

**Harry put out his tongue...** He **tasted** the man's scent on the air... He was alive but drowsing... sitting in front of a door at the end of the corridor...

**Harry longed to bite the man...** but he must master the impulse... He had more important work to do...

But the man was stirring... a silvery cloak fell from his legs as he jumped to his feet; and **Harry saw** his vibrant, blurred outline towering above him, **saw** a wand withdrawn from a belt... He had no choice... **He reared high from the floor and struck once, twice, three times, plunging his fangs deeply into the man's flesh, feeling his ribs splinter beneath his jaws, feeling the warm gush of blood...**

The man was yelling in pain... then he fell silent... He slumped backward against the wall... Blood was splattering onto the floor...

**His forehead hurt terribly... It was aching fit to burst...**

"Harry! HARRY!"

- 30 This deictic push is a major turning point in the narrative mode of the novels and in the plot. It happens during a dream, during which Harry turns into a snake. Harry is still the focaliser, but the snake takes on this role too, and they both simultaneously become the deictic centres of the scene, as if they merged together. A few pages later, Harry explains his vision to Albus Dumbledore, who gets him to put it into words. Just as the reader tries to decipher the narrator's intricate choices, so Hogwarts' headmaster tries to get Harry to enlighten him about the exact *point of view* he had during the vision. Dumbledore's role as a right-hand to the narrauthor becomes rather obvious (*HP5*, ch. 22 (433)):

**"How did you see this?"** Dumbledore asked quietly, **still not looking at Harry.**

"Well... I don't know," said Harry, rather angrily – what did it matter? "Inside my head, I suppose –"

"You misunderstand me," said Dumbledore, still in the same calm tone. "I mean... can you remember – er – **where you were positioned, as you watched this attack happen?** Were you perhaps standing beside the victim, or else looking down on the scene from above?"

This was such a curious question that Harry gaped at Dumbledore; it was almost as though he knew...

**"I was the snake," he said. "I saw it all from the snake's point of view."**

- 31 Interestingly, once this revelation is put into words by Harry, it is frequently echoed in the narration. In *HP7*, there are numerous examples of passages that show a merger of Harry and Voldemort as the main reflectors within a sentence or within a paragraph and in which they become one deictic centre, as in *HP7*, ch.9 (139):

The pain in his scar was reaching a peak, burning as it had done in the garden of The Burrow. (...)

He heard Ron agree. He could not fight the pain much longer: he had to succumb.

"Bathroom," he muttered, and he left the room as fast as he could without running.

He barely made it: bolting the door open with trembling hands, he grasped his pounding head and fell to the floor, then, in an explosion of agony, **he felt the rage that did not belong to him possess his soul, saw a long room, lit only by firelight, and the great, blond Death Eater on the floor, screaming and writhing, and a slighter figure standing over him, wand outstretched, while Harry spoke in a high, cold, merciless voice.**

- 32 The recurring presence of those episodes and of the merger of focalisation is mimetic of the final plot twist.

### The problematic encounter of fantasy and narratology

- 33 Surprisingly, this unsettling narrative tool is not used in *HP6* and only returns in *HP7*. Dumbledore, the narrauthor's right-hand man, explains to Harry that it is a choice made by Voldemort himself to use Occlumency in order to block Harry's access to his thoughts (*HP6*, ch.4 (49-50)).

- 34 The fantastic genre allows for such narrative inconsistencies or for such explanations. Indeed, the exceptional nature of the connection between Harry and Voldemort – it is exceptional even in the magical world – allows the narrauthor to use it as they see fit for plot management purposes. For instance, in *HP7*, the visions that Harry regularly has are actually insights that allow him to interpret Voldemort's plan so as to finally manage to find and destroy all the Horcruxes and kill Voldemort. This exceptional relationship is also used to justify the lack of systematicity of this technique. Indeed, when Harry has visions about Voldemort, they sometimes remain dissociated. This is generally indicated by verbs of perception such as *see* or *feel* (*HP7*, ch. 5, (67)):

And **Harry saw the white hand raise its wand** and felt Voldemort's surge of vicious anger, **saw** the frail old man on the floor writhe in agony –

- 35 Although diegetic explanations<sup>9</sup> are suggested to explain this inconsistency, the most likely one is that, as is often the case in *Bildungsromans*, the narrator chooses to use Harry as a focaliser to withhold information when necessary, in order to build up suspense and to keep the final revelation a secret for as long as possible. As a result, Harry as a focaliser is not always to be trusted as what he sees and the way he analyses it is not always the truth. In *HP5*, as he is having a vision of Voldemort torturing his Godfather, Sirius Black, there is a shift in narrative mode within a sentence (*HP5*, ch.31 (671)):

But **somebody** screamed as Voldemort lowered his wand again; **somebody** yelled and **fell** sideways of the hot desk onto the cold stone floor; **Harry** awoke as he **hit the ground**, still yelling, his scar on fire, as the Great Hall erupted all around him.

- 36 The referent of "somebody" is difficult to identify with certainty: it could be either Sirius or Harry seeing the scene through Voldemort's eyes. Manipulation is found both on the diegetic and on the narrative levels, since Voldemort has been using the

connection between them to plant false memories and dreams in Harry's mind in order to manipulate him into coming to the Ministry of Magic. The plan turns out to be successful.

- 37 In *HP5*, the reader's trust in the narrator is therefore broken: it is no longer possible to take what Harry sees at face value, partly because Harry apparently does not master what he sees, or does not see through his own eyes, but also because what Harry sees is not necessarily true. The reliability of the narrator and of Harry as a focaliser becomes all the more questionable as the plot unfolds.

### Dumbledore: the ultimate puppet of deception

- 38 In spite of the many hints scattered in the course of the novels, the reader might not have been able to foresee the final twist partly because of Dumbledore, even though he is never used as a reflector. The headmaster frequently reveals information about the connection between Harry and Voldemort to Harry and the reader, who is under the impression that Dumbledore is omniscient, like the narrator. For instance, when Dumbledore asks Harry about his vision with the snake in *HP5*, Harry suspects that Dumbledore already knows that he was the snake (*HP5*, ch.22 (433): "This was such a curious question that Harry gaped at Dumbledore; it was almost as though he knew..."). As it turns out, Dumbledore has in fact been giving semi-false explanations about the relationship between Harry and Voldemort from *HP2* onwards. In the same way that the narrator has been using narration as a means to an end, Dumbledore has been retaining major elements from Harry.
- 39 Dumbledore is one of the narrauthor's most efficient tools in their manipulation; just like the narrator, he has been shown as an omniscient and omnipotent character, trusted both by Harry and by the reader, which makes the revelation of his manipulation all the more hurtful to them both (*HP7*, ch.18 (294-295)):
- "Look what he asked from me, Hermione! Risk your life, Harry! And again! And again! And don't expect me to explain everything, just trust me blindly, trust that I know what I'm doing, trust me even though I don't trust you! Never the whole truth! Never!"
- 40 In the end, the narrauthor's most efficient manipulative trick may not only be focalisation but also the use of a powerful and influential character as a puppet of deception.

### Conclusion

- 41 Slithering through the variable narrative modes in the *Harry Potter* novels has shown that the genre of fantasy allows the narrauthor to use their authoritative power to its full extent. Indeed, in spite of a rather classical general pattern echoing the 19<sup>th</sup>-century novel – with the point of view of the omniscient narrator framing deictic pushes into Harry's focalisation – exceptional chapters pop back to the narrator's deictic field, reinforcing their powerful manipulative power, both foreshadowing and controlling the final revelation. In the end, the reader's most trusted reflector proves to be unreliable, having been manipulated all along by his professor and mentor. This final discovery may be said to be part of the coming-of-age experience for Harry and for the reader: discovering manipulation, deception and disappointment.

- 42 Finally, as we have shown, the seven volumes in the saga are not stylistically even. There was an undeniable complexification from the fourth volume onwards, and echoes were created on both the diegetic and the narrative levels. Tom Riddle's journal in *HP2* foreshadowed the revelation of the existence of Horcruxes in *HP6*, just as Harry's dreams in *HP1* and *HP3* prefigured more complex and intricate dreams and visions in the last volumes. The complexification of the narrative mode seems to have gone hand in hand with the complexification of the diegesis, and this is interesting in many respects. *HP4*, the middle volume in the saga, saw the return of Lord Voldemort and the darkening of the story. But by that point, both Harry and the "Harry Potter generation" had grown as well, and the shift to a more complex style was bound to satisfy the teenage reader's thirst for intricacy. Indeed, it may be argued that stylistic complexification also accompanied the saga's growing success: between the moment when the first novel was published (1997) and the release of the last volume (2007), the adventures of the young wizard had become a worldwide phenomenon and the saga was both being praised for its incredible richness and criticised for its lack of stylistic complexity. J.K. Rowling may arguably have more or less consciously tried to appeal to a wider readership – including adults – by complexifying her style.
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## NOTES

1. Lokrantz (1973) coined this term to signify the merger of the voices of the author and the narrator in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*. More recently, it has been used by Claire Majola-Leblond (2018), translated as "narrateur" in French, in order to account for the complex entity created by the superimposition of the author, implied author and reliable heterodiegetic narrator.
2. The term « manipulation » is used by Booth ([1961] 1983, 272) to qualify the control taken exerted by the narrator over the telling of the story or by the author over the organisation of the narrative in order to retain some information from the reader for various purposes. This echoes Genette's (1972, 206) idea according to which, in zero focalisations, the narrator knows more than the characters and possibly says more than the characters know.
3. According to Jeffries and McIntyre (2010, 161), two criticisms can be made of the notions of pushes and pops. Firstly, there are different kinds of pushes and pops (a flashback can be defined as a temporal push while a pop can be defined as a "move out of a fantasy world of a character and back into the basis-level text world [...]"). Secondly, pushes and pops are cognitive movements whose natures differ: a push implies a voluntary movement (on the part of the reader), while a pop implies an involuntary movement (on the part of the reader) – which seems counter-intuitive to McIntyre. In order to resolve those two issues, he suggests that the term "deictic shift" should always be favoured and accompanied by indications "specifying the type and direction of these". We are aware of those criticisms, and although we will use the terms "pops" and "pulls", we will endeavour to specify the type of push or pop for each occurrence.
4. Unless indicated otherwise, the bold characters in this paper are ours.
5. Non-magical.
6. Although the saga has been read by readers of all ages, it is often regarded as children's literature and it has often been argued that early readers of the saga grew up at relatively the same rhythm as the characters. They have sometimes been called the "Harry Potter generation" (Konchar Farr (ed), 2015) or the "Muggle generation" (Gierzynski, 2013). This generation were still children when the first novel was published in 1997, but they had grown into late teenagers by the time the last volume came out in 2007.

7. *HP6* stands out in the saga as the first three chapters are exceptional and fulfil different yet complementary roles: Harry is not present in the first two chapters, and the deictic push into his deictic field happens quite late in chapter 3.

8. There is also a humorous dimension to this chapter:

"He had gazed hopelessly at the Prime Minister for a moment, then said, "Well, sit down, sit down, I'd better fill you in... Have a whiskey..."

The Prime Minister rather resented being told to sit down in his own office, let alone offered his own whiskey, but he sat nevertheless. Fudge pulled out his wand, conjured two large glasses full of amber liquid out of thin air, pushed one of them into the Prime Minister's hand, and drew up a chair." (*HP6*, ch.1 (7)).

Or:

"Oh, and I almost forgot," Fudge had added. "We're importing three foreign dragons and a sphinx for the Triwizard Tournament, quite routine, but the Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures tells me that it's down in the rule book that we have to notify you if we're bringing highly dangerous creatures into the country."

"I - what - dragons?" spluttered the Prime Minister.

"Yes, three," said Fudge. "And a sphinx. Well, good day to you." (*HP6*, ch.1 (8)).

9. A possible explanation for this is that the connection between Harry and Voldemort means there is somehow a conflict in his mind, some sort of bipolar disorder (as two souls live in one body). This is epitomized at the end of *HP7*, in a scene in which both Harry and a part of Voldemort's soul become characters in a setting that represents Harry's mind. Harry therefore might sometimes experience things with the part of him that is connected to Voldemort but sometimes as his regular self. It is also very often stated that Harry sees clearly into Voldemort's mind when Voldemort loses control, which could partially account for the inconsistencies.

## ABSTRACTS

The *Harry Potter* novels are narrated from Harry's point of view: Harry is the main reflector used by an omniscient narrator and the reader is therefore led to discover the magical world alongside this young wizard who was raised in a non-magical (Muggle) family. However, this general tendency is counterbalanced by a few exceptions. The incipits are exceptional insofar as there is a clear and systematic deictic push from the omniscient narrator's deictic field to Harry's deictic field; in the whole series of novels, four incipits are not narrated from Harry's point of view at all. This paper studies the role(s) that these exceptions play at the micro and macrostructural levels in the saga. Other exceptions in focalisation – namely, the superposition of the deictic fields of Harry and of Voldemort from *HP5* onwards – are given particular attention. They show a more manipulative narrative switch on the part of the author as they echo, or foreshadow, the revelation of the magical relationship that binds Harry to his enemy, Lord Voldemort.

Les romans de la saga *Harry Potter* sont narrés du point de vue de Harry : il est le principal réflecteur utilisé par un narrateur omniscient. Le lecteur est ainsi amené à découvrir le monde magique aux côtés de ce jeune sorcier élevé dans une famille non magique (Moldue). Cependant, cette tendance générale est contrebalancée par quelques exceptions. Les incipits sont exceptionnels dans la mesure où il y a une plongée déictique nette et systématique du champ déictique du narrateur omniscient au champ déictique de Harry ; dans toute la série de romans,

quatre incipits ne sont pas du tout narrés du point de vue de Harry. Cet article étudie le(s) rôle(s) que ces exceptions jouent aux niveaux micro- et macro-structuraux de la saga. Une attention particulière est portée aux autres exceptions en matière de focalisation, à savoir la superposition des champs déictiques de Harry et de Voldemort à partir de *HP5*. Elle montre un changement narratif plus manipulateur de la part de l'auteure dans la mesure où elle fait écho ou anticipe la révélation finale quant à la relation magique qui lie Harry à son ennemi, Lord Voldemort.

## INDEX

**Mots-clés:** champ déictique, plongée déictique, retrait déictique, fusion de focalisation(s), Harry Potter, manipulation

**Keywords:** deictic field, deictic push, deictic pop, merger of focalisation(s), Harry Potter, manipulation

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