

Harry Potter, Memories, Prophecies and Links of Destiny

The saga of Harry Potter weaves in the future of Muggle and Wizard worlds with the close destinies of the central characters: Harry himself, James and Lily Potter, Dumbledore, Snape, Draco, Voldemort primarily. But other characters are closely related to it, through the agency of Dumbledore, such as Aberforth, his brother, and Grindelwald, the dark magician who was one of his early, close collaborators. These relationships cross paths within the very limited space of Godric's Hollow, where other events preceded in history. Godric's Hollow was named in honor of Godric Gryffindor, a great wizard and one of the four founders of the Hogwarts School of Magic. He was at first friends with Salazar Slytherin, another one of the founders, but then opposed his drive to refuse Muggle-born students at Hogwarts. Voldemort furthered Slytherin's ideas.

As Harry grows in wisdom and humanity, and the Muggle and Wizard worlds are harmonized, so are his immediate destiny relationships. Only the Dark Lord seals his own fate by excluding himself from any possible grace.

At first, as can be expected, the young and insecure Hogwarts student seeks himself in the past (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*). He wants understanding and reassurance. Nothing more normal then, that once he finds the Mirror of Erised, he sees his parents and wants to bask in their love. Dumbledore warns him about the dangers of looking at the past through the mirror.

In the end Harry has to learn to accept the pain of his unknown past, at least for now. He can then confront Voldemort through the mirror of Erised that he has learned to resist. In a symmetrical way Dumbledore has to renounce the everlasting life possible through the Sorcerer's Stone and the help of the alchemist Nicolas Flamel.¹

The theme of time past continues in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. Two false biographies stand against each other. Gilderoy Lockhart, who is supposed to fight against the Dark Arts, has resorted to a false/embellished biography out of personal vanity. Tom Riddle has left Hogwarts a diary of another false biography. His intentions are otherwise darker than those of Lockhart.

Ginny is drained of her life forces by Tom Riddle's diary just like Harry risked being deceived by the mirror of Erised. Harry needs to let go of illusions concerning his parents, Ginny of her childish love for Harry. In the confrontation with the Basilisk and young Tom Riddle Harry is rescued by the Phoenix, Fawkes, the being of death and rebirth, who offers healing because Harry acted selflessly. Harry's survival is made possible through his devotion to the teacher and the ideals which Fawkes embodies.

¹ Here reference is made to an alchemist who lived between 1330 and 1418.

The theme of the past moves from the personal to the historical level in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Sirius Black is a victim of machinations aimed at rewriting official history. Harry has to overcome himself—his hatred for the one who supposedly helped kill his parents. He then helps Black clear his name, or at least save himself from persecution.

The book shows us the importance of a correct assessment of the past, personal and historical, through which we can face the future in freedom. To all of this is added the freedom in time that comes through Hermione's power of thought, that is made visible with the time-turner. Hermione already senses in the present the seeds of other futures, among which she can choose. One future scenario can fix another gone wrong.

In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* Harry goes back in time; he is following the tacit agreement of Dumbledore and the Phoenix. Through the pensieve he lands in a courtroom, among an audience which includes Dumbledore and Mad-Eye Moody. He sees Karkaroff, accused of having been a death-eater, strapped to a chair, questioned by Barty Crouch. Karkaroff gives out many names of accomplices, including Snape, but Dumbledore stands up and vouches for the latter. In the end Karkaroff denounces Barty Crouch's son. The father accuses Barty Junior of many awful things, including subjecting the Longbottoms to the Cruciatus curse. Mr. Crouch sentences his only son to a lifetime in Azkaban. Harry Potter's vision stands on objective ground; Dumbledore confirms him.

A turning point of the whole Harry Potter saga is reached at the conclusion of the fourth and central book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. At the end of the test of the maze, since they both helped each other throughout the tournament, Harry and Cedric decide to touch the trophy at the same time, becoming the winners together. However, the cup turns out to be a portkey.

Harry and Cedric land in an eerie graveyard and Cedric is killed instantly. They landed in Godric's Hollow, where so many biographies are linked together. Wormtail ties Harry tightly to the tombstone of Tom Riddle. He then boils water in a giant cauldron. Performing dark magic, Wormtail mixes in the water a bundled object, which is scaly, red, and has a flat snakelike face; it is the limp body of Voldemort. He adds his right hand that he slices off willingly, blood that he draws from Harry and the bone of Tom Riddle's father. Lord Voldemort thus rises again.

The Dark Lord calls on other wizards, Death Eaters, who apparate in a circle around him, each of them hooded and masked. He turns to Harry and calls the "Cruciatus" spell, placing the youth under excruciating pain. Harry feels his injured leg crumple under him as he stands up, wand in hand. Voldemort challenges him to a duel and places him again under the Cruciatus curse. He then calls the Imperius curse, which Harry has learned to resist.

Harry is resigned to stand up to the Dark Lord and die fighting, like his parents. As Voldemort cries "Avada Kedavra," Harry cries "Expelliarmus." The light from the two wands meets in midair, lifting both Harry and Voldemort into a golden, dome-shaped web of light. Harry hears the beautiful sound of the phoenix song whispering to him not to break the connection. He sees a bead of light traveling across the thread connecting him to Voldemort.

When the bead touches the tip of Voldemort's wand, appear the forms of Cedric, then that of an old Muggle (Frank Bryce), followed by Bertha Jorkins, then Harry's parents, all of them Voldemort's victims. They crowd around him, and finally his mother tells him that once he lets go, they will linger long enough to give him time to touch the cup/portkey and return to Hogwarts. The shadows of Voldemort's victims remain and close in upon Voldemort. Harry summons the Triwizard cup to himself and returns to Hogwarts. In a short space of time are reunited many figures who played an important role in Harry's life, especially his parents.

In Book 5 *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Harry sees what has just happened—Ron's father under imminent danger—correctly, but under the spell of Voldemort.

Personal memories become a true battlefield. Voldemort's "legilimency"—the ability to read another person's feelings and memories—has to be countered by Harry's "occlumency," a mind self-defense against outside penetration, taught to Harry by Snape. Severus invades Harry's memories a number of times, then Harry breaks through to Snape's memories. In so doing he is devastated by perceiving young James and Sirius' cruel behavior toward Snape. He comes to know what destiny united his mother to Snape, and has to learn to accept ambiguity in all his loved ones, including Sirius Black and James Potter.

Harry has the ability to recognize what has happened through dreams and visions but is vulnerable to Voldemort, who can trick him and use him for his goals, such as retrieve Harry's prophecy from the ministry of magic. Whereas the first time Harry allows the rescue of Mr. Weasley, the second time he is tricked by Voldemort into believing that Sirius is in danger. Sirius will be killed, much to Harry's chagrin.

The stream of the future is represented by Harry's prophecy, that Voldemort wants to retrieve. Ultimately the prophecy is shattered and Harry comes to know about it through Dumbledore. Sixteen years previous, Sybill Trelawney made a prophecy about a boy who was born at the end of July to parents who had defied Voldemort three times. This part of the prophecy could have applied to either Harry or Neville Longbottom, who was also born at the end of July to parents who were members of the Order of the Phoenix. The prophecy went on to say that Voldemort would mark the child as his equal, choosing the boy that he thought would be the most

dangerous to him. Dumbledore believes Voldemort chose Harry because he was a half-blood, just like the Dark Lord. A struggle has arisen around this knowledge. Fortunately Voldemort only heard the first part of the prophecy. The second part proclaimed that the child would have powers that the Dark Lord would not know, and that either must die at the hand of the other, for neither can live while the other survives. Dumbledore tells Harry that the distinguishing power he has is love.

The theme of false memories reappears, metamorphosed, in Book 6, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. Dumbledore shows Harry through the pensieve one of Slughorn's memories that involves Tom Riddle/Voldemort. He explains that the memory has been tampered by Horace Slughorn, who did not want Dumbledore to know what really happened when Riddle asked questions about the use of so-called "horcruxes." As Gilderoy Lockhart embellished his biography, so did Slughorn cover his own tracks. The two kinds of memories are arranged symmetrically in book 2 and book 6.

All the time-themes of book 6 have to do with memory and history. Harry can only properly fight Voldemort if he has all the correct information. On his side Voldemort has worked at changing memories, accusing the wrong people and falsifying history. And Voldemort wants to get hold of Harry's prophecy. Harry has to master his emotions following what emerges from memories that concern him—such as the death of his parents or the death of Dumbledore—when he doesn't have all the information he needs.

Furthermore, Harry has to decide between knowledge and wisdom. Trusting the Luciferic knowledge of the half-blood prince puts him at risk. He can cross the line and act almost as a Death-Eater when he uses the "sectum-sempra" spell on Draco. On one hand he can save a life—by resorting to the use of the bezoar to rescue Ron—on the other come close to killing Draco. Another theme, closely allied to Snape is the conflicted soul of Draco courting the death of the soul in a way that is reminiscent of Snape himself, the 'hero' of this story. And it's a salvation for both that Snape has signed an unbreakable vow concerning Draco, with his mother.

We finally arrive at *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The past of Dumbledore plays an important part in legitimizing the role of the Order of the Phoenix and Harry, now its main hero. The legacy of an initiate has to stand full scrutiny and Harry has to overcome his personal anger against his master and friend. It is important to recognize the element of personal development even in a Magus as high as Dumbledore.

Rita Skeeter, the journalist who misrepresented Harry in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, is back again, only now with an injurious biography, pretending to debunk Dumbledore's life and work. The theme of the false biographies continues. However, such biographies are based on actual real-life events that were not well-known or understood. From there it is easy to offer the worse possible interpretation, especially when such a work of

journalism pursues aims, conscious or not, parallel to those of Voldemort's followers. Harry needs to know and doubt sets in his mind, doubt which is aggravated by his present difficult situation and deep feelings of frustration and impatience.

Once more Harry has a flashback still from Voldemort's perspective, of the night the Dark Lord killed his parents and tried to murder Harry. The past of Dumbledore plays a part through Grindelwald, whom Harry finds in the lines of a book and whom Voldemort subsequently kills. Harry and Voldemort are called once more by destiny to Godric's Hollow, the place where their karma converges.

The visit offers the opportunity for Harry to see his parents' grave with the motto engraved "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." He also receives here indications about the reality of the three Deathly Hallows, through the emblem engraved on the grave of Ignotus Peverell—the youngest and wisest of the Peverell brothers, who asked for the Invisibility Cloak from death in the story of the Deathly Hallows. This is another theme that ties into Harry's biography since he has inherited the Invisibility Cloak.

Next to Harry the shades of his parents appear, as well as those of Sirius and Lupin, the latter just killed in the recent battle. The shades express pride in him and tell him that it doesn't hurt to die. They promise to accompany him in his ordeal, invisible to all but him. Harry can let go of the resurrection stone, trusting what he has just learned and serenely accepting his death at the hand of Voldemort. The sorcerer's stone of book 1 has become the resurrection stone in book 7. Like Ignotus Peverell, Harry sheds the power that is his to take. It is of further interest to note that the central encounters with Lord Voldemort take place primarily in book 1, book 4 and book 7.

After accepting to die at the hand of Voldemort, Harry meets with Dumbledore in an otherworldly setting, where much is revealed of what happened through his willing sacrifice to Voldemort, e.g., the unenviable, coming fate of the Dark Lord. Harry is rescued from death through his personal choice to return. When Narcissa, Draco's mother, approaches him, she is moved to pronounce him dead because she comes to know that Harry has rescued and saved Draco. Thus Harry can be present for the final confrontation with a practically already vanquished Dark Lord.

Before the final victory there has been a further healing in the reconciliation of Aberforth with his brother Dumbledore. Aberforth has rescued Harry and friends twice, the first time through the intermediary of Dobby. Now he has the opportunity to shed light on Dumbledore's past: his friendship with Grindelwald; Dumbledore's pain at the treatment of his sister Ariana by Muggles, which affected her inner balance; Dumbledore's naïve belief in a world in which Muggles could be governed by well-meaning Wizards. He can see how Grindelwald deceived him. Harry can fill in the missing pieces,

since he witnessed how much this part of his past weighed on Dumbledore's consciousness to the very last. Aberforth can overcome his last reticence and discouragement and fully join Harry's ranks.

Just before the final confrontation Harry heals his past perceptions and enmity with Snape through the memories of the latter that he sees in the pensieve. Harry recognizes his biographic link with the half-blood prince, and sees how Snape redeemed himself in serving Harry and Dumbledore. The destiny of Draco is revealed and Harry can rejoice in having rescued his life. And, even to the very end, Harry can offer a last chance to Voldemort. To the Dark Lord touting the power of the last of the Deathly Hallows—the Elder Wand—Harry replies "Think and try for some remorse Riddle." The destiny Harry has intuited at King's Cross is the only possible epilogue for Voldemort.

Another theme interweaves through the seven books. No individual is completely on one side of the equation of good and evil, except Voldemort and maybe Grindelwald, whose presence is mostly peripheral to the story. Dumbledore has learned the hard way what it means to fall into the illusion of wisdom married to power. He can then rescue Snape's soul from the clutches of the Death Eaters. And the two together can come to Draco's help before he falls under the spell of the Dark Lord. Harry could not succeed in his effort without the help of Snape, whose destiny was intimately linked with Lily Potter.

All of the above would apparently leave Harry as the perfect one, but this is not so. We have seen that when Harry suspects Draco of being a Death Eater he resorts to inflicting a Sectumsempra spell. At Gringotts, when Harry wants to put his hands on the Hufflepuff cup horcrux, he first tries the Imperius Curse on the goblin who is attending to Hermione/Bellatrix, then on a Death Eater. At Hogwarts, when he sees Amcycus spit on McGonagall's face, he sends him a Cruciatus Curse, in a situation that does not even seem to warrant such an excess. Thus the only spell left to try is the Avada Kedavra, but here Harry draws a line. In essence the problem of evil is not something of right and wrong, saints and villains, but a battle that each one wages in his soul with varying degrees of success. Harry's hard karma has prepared him to display an exceptional degree of dispassionate self-assessment and empathy. For this he can be grateful to the earnest and devoted presence of his teacher Dumbledore and the help James and Lily send from the other side.

When all the last veils of destiny have dropped what survives are the positive threads that united every individual, except Voldemort. Hogwarts and the Muggle world have been rescued and all the pain of the personal past is reconciled.