

## Privacy in The Deathly Hallows

Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows has often been criticized among even the most ardent fans for being too plodding, for devoting too much space and energy to Harry, Ron, and Hermione camping in the woods while avoiding capture and looking for Horcruxes. The preceding six books were memorable for their wide cast of characters, their action scenes, their expanding fantasy world, and what John Granger calls “narrative misdirection,” Rowling’s way of tricking readers into missing vital clues that allowed for a clever twist in the closing chapters. The seventh book seemed to abandon all of this – for long stretches the world is reduced to just three characters with almost nothing to go on and no plot to drive them forward, with no mystery for the reader to solve.

Expanding on a sidelined thread from my forthcoming monograph on children’s detective fiction, this presentation will explain why The Deathly Hallows is so necessarily slow. I will argue that the book is preoccupied with images of failed communication, not simply in an attempt to undermine or toy with mystery conventions but because Rowling is so interested in themes of privacy. This paper will develop an updated notion of what privacy means in children’s fiction, and how privacy intersects with detective conventions. Privacy after all is touchy subject in plot dominated by a scathing biography exposing the private life of the book’s towering figure, Dumbledore. Utilizing Max Van Manen and Bas Levering’s *Childhood’s Secrets: Intimacy, Privacy, and the Self Reconsidered*, along with a whole range of Potter criticism, I will concentrate on close readings of two chapters: “Kreacher’s Tale,” wherein Harry stumbles on a piece of writing from his mother, and “Godric’s Hollow,” wherein Harry and Hermione return to the scene of the first crime in the books. This paper is a corrective for a book that is too often neglected. This is a vital book for mapping the increasing popularity of this theme of privacy, this question of what the young should know about adults and what adults should know about the young, and what each keeps secret from the other.