

“Fate,” Blue replied, “is a very weighty word to throw around before breakfast.”

—

Foreshadowing as a Narrative in *The Raven Boys* by Maggie Stiefvater

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Autumn 2019

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Abstract

This Bachelor's Thesis studies foreshadowing used as a narrative and characterization device in the young adult novel *The Raven Boys* (2012) by Maggie Stiefvater. The story follows a group of friends in modern day Virginia, as they search for the sleeping king, Glendower. Characters and their development is more on the foreground of the series than actual plot and action. In addition to the paranormal aspects of sleeping kings and psychics, there are ghosts and nonlinearity of time. This plays a major part in the series, as one of the main characters, Noah Czerny, turns out to be a ghost and from a different timeline. This foreshadowing is the focus of this thesis which investigates mainly the first book of the series, although a few notices to later books in the series are made. This thesis draws on studies on narratology and foreshadowing in art and literature. I have divided the analysis chapter into noticeable types of foreshadowing and the ways of hiding them from the reader, and in that way go through the examples with the help of previous studies on the topic. As the findings of this thesis show, foreshadowing can be used as the major device for characterization and plot in a story focused on the characters and the writing style, and there are different methods for both bringing foreshadowing signs up and for hiding them in plain sight in the narrative.

Tiivistelmä

Tämä kandidityö tutkii ennakointia narratiivisena ja hahmonkehityksen työkaluna Maggie Stiefvaterin nuorten aikuisten romaanissa *The Raven Boys* (2012). Tarina seuraa ystäväporukkaa nykypäivän Virginiassa heidän etsiessään nukkuvaa kuningasta, Glendoweria – tosin itse hahmot ja heidän kehityksensä on enemmän sarjan etualalla kuin juoni ja tapahtumantäyteisyys. Nukkuvien kuninkaiden ja selvännäkijöiden lisäksi paranormaaleja elementtejä ovat aaveet ja ajan epälineaarisuus. Näillä on suuri rooli sarjassa, sillä yksi päähahmoista, Noah Czerny, paljastuu aaveeksi ja olevan kotoisin eri aikajanalta. Kyseisen juonenpiirteen ennakointi on tutkielman aiheena erityisesti sarjan ensimmäisen kirjan kautta, tosin muutama huomio myöhempisiin sarjan teoksiin tulee myös esiin. Pääakateemiset lähteet ja taustatutkimukset ovat narratologia ja ennakoinnin käyttö taiteessa ja kirjallisuudessa. Olen jakanut analyysiluvun huomattaviin ennakointityyppeihin ja tapoihin, joilla ne piilotetaan lukijalta – ja käyn kirjasta löytyvien

esimerkkien läpi aiempien aiheen tutkimusten avulla. Kuten tämä analyysi näyttää, ennakointi voi olla tärkeässä osassa hahmonkehityksen ja juonen kannalta henkilöhahmoihin ja kirjoitustyyliin keskittyneessä tarinassa. On myös olemassa useita eri tapoja, joilla ennakoinnin merkit narratiivissa voidaan niin tuoda esille kuin piilottaa näkyvälle paikalle.

1. Introduction

Foreshadowing in general is largely prominent in stories, from literature classics to movies. As an example, in the *Harry Potter* -series by J.K. Rowling, many events in the later books are foreshadowed already in the first one; such as the meaning behind Harry's lightning scar. Foreshadowing gives the reader hints for what is to come later and makes them able to guess on the outcomes. It can be used in the narrative for suspense or as a way to make the reader intrigued and to keep them reading the story until the very end. Additionally, it can be a tool for characterization or character development, and often by having foreshadowing signs, the story seems more planned out and the events more connected. These last two points are both the main usage of foreshadowing in the novel studied in this thesis, *The Raven Cycle* (2012) by Maggie Stiefvater. Foreshadowing is an interesting aspect to examine in this particular book, since it may often be seen as a part of plot-driven stories more than character-focused ones. *The Raven Cycle* belongs to the latter category, and still has foreshadowing as one of the main parts of the narrative.

The Raven Cycle is a supernatural young adult series set in contemporary Virginia. Readers interested in especially stories with atmospheric settings and ambient writing style, as well as well-rounded characters are likely to enjoy it. One of the favourite discussion points to the readers of the series is foreshadowing and the character of Noah. Therefore, in this thesis I will analyze the role that foreshadowing has in the narrative of especially the first novel of *The Raven Cycle*; *The Raven Boys*. I will aim to examine the quiddity of foreshadowing as a narrative device in the character arc of Noah, as well as identify and discuss why the signs of foreshadowing often stay hidden from the reader.

I have divided the thesis into five chapters. Firstly, I will introduce the novel studied, *The Raven Boys*, by providing a short synopsis on what the story is about, as well as give some information about the author and *The Raven Cycle* series as a whole, and additionally discuss the author's inspiration for using foreshadowing in her writing. After that I will give definitions for the key concepts of the literary analysis; narration and foreshadowing. Following the background information, I shall continue onto chapter four, in which I will be analysing the foreshadowing in the character Noah's plotline.

In conclusion, even though there is no ready-made map of approaching research on foreshadowing, it is an important part of literature, and it does provide an interesting viewpoint and quiddity to analysing the narrative, and in this thesis I aim to discuss both the connections that foreshadowing makes and the reasons why foreshadowing is difficult to see.

2. The Raven Cycle

The Raven Cycle is a quartet containing of the novels *The Raven Boys* (2012), *The Dream Thieves* (2013), *Blue Lily, Lily Blue* (2014) and *The Raven King* (2016). As the books were being released, the amount of attention they got from readers grew steadily, which then lead the author to additionally write a few short stories following the characters from the series. Furthermore, after some years of waiting, even a spin-off trilogy was announced, starting with the first book *Call Down The Hawk*, which came out in November of 2019. The book follows some of the original characters after the last book of the quartet, and includes both foreshadowed elements and the familiar, lyrical writing style of the original quartet.

The genre of *The Raven Cycle* is young adult literature; books meant for the age groups of teenagers and those in their early twenties. It is, in a way, also contemporary; set in the ‘real world’, though there are supernatural, mythological and fantasy aspects, too. However, the whole story does not revolve around those elements which is why it can be sorted into the genre of contemporary with magical elements.

This thesis mainly focuses on the first novel of the quartet – *The Raven Boys* – but some notices relating to books two to four are made a time or few.

2.1. The Raven Boys

The Raven Boys (2012) follows a vast cast of characters set in modern-day US in the fictitious town of Henrietta, Virginia. The writing style is very ambient, whimsical and lyrical; this allows the story’s atmosphere, setting and characters to come across as very vibrant. The story – especially the first half of it – is more about the complex and well-rounded characters and their development, than about plot and action. However, through these character-driven moments and scenes, a detailed plot is cleverly sculptured, especially through foreshadowing.

The story’s protagonist is a high school student called Blue Sargent, who in addition to her studies, works part-time as a dog-walker, and as a waitress in the local diner Nino’s. Blue lives at 300 Fox Way together with a number of her female relatives; her mother, aunts and cousins, all of whom are psychics – except for Blue herself.

Blue then meets four Aglionby – the local all-boys private school – students Gansey, Adam, Ronan and Noah, who are looking for a Welsh king, Glendower. According to the legend, Glendower was brought to Virginia after his disappearance from history, and that whoever finds and wakes him will be granted a favor – such as other myths about sleeping kings who will one day wake, for example King Arthur. Through this mutual interest in Glendower, Blue becomes part of the friend group, and the story continues.

2.2. Background on the author and the series

As of November 2019, the popularity of *The Raven Cycle* is still at its height. New readers and old ones are enjoying the series, even coming up with their own theories on the story and its characters – as can be seen in online fan accounts such as on YouTube or Instagram – especially about the character of Noah, who fades away from the story in the later books, even though the story depended hugely on him in the beginning. The quiddity of Noah, the rest of the characters, the setting and the story itself are still inspiring readers to read or reread the books time and again. As mentioned, the popularity of the series can be seen even more noticeably with the release of a sequel *The Dreamer's Trilogy*, through which readers will be able to revisit old characters and settings and discover new ones. But where did it all begin?

The author, Maggie Stiefvater from Virginia, graduated college with a Colloquial, Bachelor's degree in history. The effect of her major is noticeable in *The Raven Cycle*; the whole overarching plot revolves around a historical figure. In addition, in college Stiefvater played in an Irish folk band. Irish music especially is a part of the series, as one of the main characters is from Ireland and does both listen to and learn Irish music. In addition to studying history and playing music, Stiefvater wrote numerous manuscripts of novels during her college years, and eventually got her books published. Even though currently she is most famous for being the author of *The Raven Cycle*, previously, her *The Wolfes of Mercy Falls*-series (2009 – 2014) made her well-known in the young adult literature genre. The series about a teenage girl and a werewolf came out during the hype of paranormal young adult romances and thus gained popularity. Stiefvater had tried writing *The Raven Cycle* ever since she was a teenager, but found it too difficult, which lead her to write *The Wolfes of Mercy Falls* instead before returning to the world of Henrietta (Clare K., Stiefvater interview). According to the author – due to the difficulty of writing *The*

Raven Cycle's intricate plot – she created the simplest plot for *The Wolfes of Mercy Falls* but wrote it as well as she could (Clare K., Stiefvater interview) – afterwards returning to write *The Raven Cycle* with its extremely intricate plot.

Stiefvater found the inspiration for *The Raven Cycle* when she read Susan Cooper's book series *The Dark is Rising* (1965-1977) which is set in back-then contemporary Wales, about the myth of King Arthur, Celtic and Nordic mythology (Clare K., Stiefvater interview). In comparison, *The Raven Cycle* is set in contemporary Virginia with aspects of Celtic mythology and focuses on a medieval Welsh king. According to Stiefvater, *The Dark is Rising* has magic coming "up through the sidewalk and it felt like [there] could be magic in the real world" (Clare K., Stiefvater interview). This then inspired Stiefvater's magic system for *The Raven Cycle*; in the beginning of the book it may seem more contemporary sprinkled with a few magical elements, but as the story goes on, more and more magical elements emerge. In addition to these aspects, *The Dark is Rising* does also have a clearly planned out plot with signs towards future events in the books of the series which Stiefvater found particularly interesting (Clare K., Stiefvater interview) – and that is where the foreshadowing aspect comes in in *The Raven Cycle* as well.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section I will give examples of previous academic research on the topic of foreshadowing and narratology. Understanding the narrative structure and plot in stories is important for working with foreshadowing, since foreshadowing stems from narration.

3.1. Narratology

Back in the Victorian era one of the main points that literary critics paid attention to in their reviews was assessing the plots and “the quality of the links they establish” (Kukkonen 4), and therefore literary reviews used to focus on the narration. However, since then the focus has moved from plot to more abstract matters – such as themes, discussion on characters or other similar aspects.

To start with the basics, the definition for plot is, according to E. M. Forster “causally connected story events” (Forster via Kukkonen 6). To further, a “story describes: “The king died, and then the queen died,” whereas a plot motivates: “The king died, and then the queen died of grief” (Forster via Kukkonen 6). This means that a story can exist without a plot; as just describing events without making any connections between them – whereas a plot gives motivation to the story, connects the events and gives them meaning. The plot, at its simplest, means the effect the king’s death has on the queen which then leads to the end of the story.

However, usually the simpler plots can be found in children’s literature, and thus when looking at young adult or adult literature, the plots in them become more and more complicated and layered – for example, in adult high fantasy novels with their own worlds, settings, magic systems, kingdoms, politics – not to forget the characters, side stories and additional details.

To further, the plot can also be designed to confound the expected outcomes, anticipated events and narrative sequences (Kukkonen 9). As a simple example, if a character picks up a set of keys and tells that she is off to go driving, instead of getting in a car as most readers would expect, she will instead rise up to a helicopter. In that way, the author can make it unexpected, and in some cases, even more challenging to the reader to follow.

However, the unexpected outcome does have the possibility of becoming expected. Because even though the narrative is usually written and structured in a manner that the reader will

read the story in the correct narrative sequence, there is the possibility that a reader or few will flip to the last page before reading the rest of the story to know what the outcome will be (Grabes 2). This is more common, though, with readers of detective stories, who will “read the ending early on in order to know ‘whodunnit’” (Grabes 2). If one then compares two different readers of the same book, one who has read the ending and one who has not, differences in the reading experiences can be noticed. The narrator’s intention directs the readers through the story events in a planned sequence, unfolding the plot and the outcome sign by sign, page by page (Kukkonen 8) but the reader who knows the outcome beforehand will notice all of the foreshadowing signs and mentions leading to the ending in a different manner than planned by the author, whereas the reader unknowledgeable on the outcome of the story, will not be as likely to make attachments between the events and the ending, since they do not know what it will be, therefore experiencing the story in more present-like manner.

While plot and sequentiality are common, plottedness is also used in some narratives (Brooks, 113) and in some novels more than in others, it is clearly visible. In an interview Stiefvater did talk on her writing process of *The Raven Cycle*, and how she needs to have the basic outline and the “beats” – main events in the plotline or characterization – in order to write. One of these beats was about characters and how throughout the story they make leaps towards that beat, building up to it for as long as possible, in order for the outcome or the reveal to feel more earned (Clare K., Stiefvater interview). And the reader can definitely see when a “beat” (to use the authors word) takes place; it does seem like a plot twist. However, when one remembers all the lead up to that beat, it does make sense – all of the breadcrumbs that were there throughout the story, only they did not stand out before. All of these beats, then, lead to all of the foreshadowing found in Stiefvaters novels – in this case *The Raven Boys*. The author has indeed, on numerous occasions, mentioned in interviews or discussions how all the small details are foreshadowing future events, sometimes ones from not yet published novels. That is why Stiefvater’s novel is great for studying plot; there are times in the story where it might seem that there is actually no plot at all, really just small moments and character development; but in the end it all comes together in a way that makes one wonder how did they not pick up on all the signs of foreshadowing in the first place.

3.2 Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing in narration is used to guide the reader's attention towards future developments in the story; however, the reader usually deals with them unconsciously since they are written into the narrative in an indiscernible manner (Sharpe 1). They are in the text figuratively, and similar to dead metaphors, they go unnoticed by the reader (Sharpe 2). The signs of foreshadowing can also be too "varied in their application that they elude our conceptual grasp almost as readily as they do our hands" (Sharpe 2).

The signs of foreshadowing indicate that something will happen in the story; the shadow is caused by something *later* (Morson 46). In that way a foreshadowing sign takes the reader's attention towards a particular later event by nodding towards it before it has happened, even though the sign might well go unnoticed at the edge of the reader's consciousness, since it does not necessarily come across the page that strongly. In comparison, in real life, you can reach the shadow of an object before reaching the object itself, but the shadow is caused by the object at that same moment in time as you reach the shadow (Morson 46). However, in literary foreshadowing, the reader reaches the shadow of a future event before the event occurs (Morson 47). This means that the shadow is there indicating *a future event* in the story; it is not caused by something in the present – it is there, giving an advance sign about a future (Morson 48). A good example of what foreshadowing is in practice, can be found in the main source of this thesis, *Narrative and freedom: The shadows of time* (1994), an acclaimed book on the topic by Gary Saul Morson;

"Let us suppose that a character is happy, confident of the future, and celebrating a victory that promises still greater success. Obstacles are melting ever faster. But although he does not know it, a thunderstorm, which the author describes in some detail, is approaching. Even if the hero did know of the storm, it would indicate to him nothing more than rain; but the reader recognizes it as foreshadowing, the sign of a reversal fortune . . . The storm happens because something else is going to happen. It is caused by a subsequent event, and that is why it is an instance of foreshadowing" (47).

In that way, in relation to time, foreshadowing makes the future already written (Morson 49) which is only possible in fiction. This leads us to the fact that if a character in the story themselves sees a sign of foreshadowing, it is no longer foreshadowing but a part of the characters story; that way turning it into an omen instead (Morson 63). To put it simply, an omen would be noticed both by the reader and the characters – whereas only the reader can see foreshadowing, the characters cannot. However, a character noticing a foreshadowing without it changing into an omen can be used as a metafictional device since foreshadowing in itself already calls the reader's attention to the "already written nature of narrative time" (Morson 49).

Even though foreshadowing is, in a way, designed to draw attention to the future developments of the plot, according to Baxandall the "inattentiveness" towards the narrative enables the carefully crafted signs of foreshadowing to escape most readers' notice (Baxandall via Sharpe 2) until the foreshadowed event takes place, which, then again, differentiates foreshadowing from spoilers.

However, even though the above-mentioned inattentiveness and the ability of the foreshadowing signs to go unnoticed is a crucial part of foreshadowing as a narrative, it should also be noted that foreshadowing signs do need to be noticed only at the edge of the reader's consciousness. One reason for them to go unnoticed is that since outside of literature, of movies, of stories, foreshadowing cannot exist; it is tied to the knowledge of both the present and future events. This directedness of time means an "asymmetry in knowledge: we know a lot more about the past than about the future" (Morson 46). That is to say, after a work of fiction, a novel, is finished, all the events in it coexist at the same time, and that is why foreshadowing is possible. The characters only exist in the one present in the novel a reader is currently on, but the reader can see the foreshadowing and interpret it as a sign of what will happen later in the story due to this earlier event (Morson 55). In addition, foreshadowing is a "reminder of the author's essential surplus" (Morson 47), therefore it could also be seen as a device of metafiction. The narrator's reminder that all the events of the novel are coexisting and that the ending of the story is already existing with the rest of it even when one starts reading page one. This could be added to the fact that in *The Raven Cycle*, time is not always linear – similar to foreshadowing.

4. Foreshadowing in *The Raven Boys*: A Collection of examples and analysis

In this chapter, I will go into detail on a path of foreshadowing in *The Raven Boys*, give examples of it, analyse them, and see how foreshadowing is used as a narrative device, and how it is hidden in plain sight. Even though there are numerous occasions of foreshadowing – some of them solved within a page or two, some of them coming up in later installments of the series – I will focus on Noah Czerny’s plotline, which is one of the main plot lines in *The Raven Cycle* and for the most part gets solved in the first novel. Upon a reread Noah’s plotline seems the most clear piece of foreshadowing in the novel, with numerous signs building up to the plot twist of it.

In the following sections I will analyse these signs in Noah’s dialogue and appearance, descriptions of his character, paragraph changes and Noah’s timeline leading up to the second half of his foreshadowed characterization. Each section includes examples of foreshadowing in relation to Noah’s character, which are apparent throughout the narrative. I will then analyze them with the help of especially previous studies on the topics of narration and foreshadowing.

4.1. Narration through foreshadowing: Noah Czerny

The plotline of Noah Czerny focuses on one of the main characters of the novel, called Noah. Noah is one of the main Aglionby students of the story, the other ones being Adam, Gansey and Ronan. He is also the third flatmate of Monmouth Manufacturing along with Ronan and Gansey. He is often described as awkward and quiet but very friendly. In addition, in the last chapters of the story it turns out that he happens to be a ghost and on a different timeline than the others.

4.1.1. Noah’s first line of dialogue

Of course, the first aspect that comes to mind after having reached the point of the story in which it is revealed that Noah has been a ghost for the whole time of his friendship with Adam, Gansey, Ronan and Blue, is his first line of dialogue, right in the beginning of the novel: “I’ve been dead for seven years,” Noah said. “That’s as warm as they get” (47). This is in response to another character mentioning how cold his hands are when they shake hands. However, since the statement is so straightforward, it does not seem like a foreshadowing to anything, merely a quirky or sarcastic response. As Sharpe explains, foreshadowing signs which “contain some vital quality,

need to be joined to a caster . . . or else they will be disruptive, attention-seeking” (4). That is to say, by having Noah’s dialogue be connected to something that in a way makes sense, the shadow is connected to a “caster” (Sharpe 4). In this case the caster is the fact that Noah’s first line is connected to his hands being cold – which could well be due to the chilly spring evening the scene takes place in.

The response is easily lost in the midst of the lyrical and unique writing style of the narrative, as just another peculiar line. The line is weird and does not make sense at that moment and so it does go unnoticed amongst the writing style of the rest of the story around it. As Morson explains whilst discussing another novel in his book, the narration of a novel is characteristic to the author, and by adding details and surplus, the reader is presented with seemingly “irrelevant” information (Morson 77). The following paragraph from *The Raven Boys* is a good example of this:

“Gansey turned the key. The engine turned over once, paused for the briefest of moments – and then roared to deafening life. The Camaro lived to fight another day. The radio was even working, playing the Stevie Nicks song that always sounded to Gansey like it was about a one-winged dove. He tried one of the french fries they’d brought him. They were cold” (27).

The paragraph consists of sentences with peculiar, unnecessary information, sentences that do not really have anything to do with the plot, the story, or the movement of the narrative. But by having sections as such, the signs of foreshadowing that are disconnected from the paragraphs surrounding them – and that are written without a clear explanation as to why the sentence is there – the foreshadowing is more likely to go unnoticed by the reader as well.

Another good example of this is the following sentence where the narrator is describing two of the characters in the novel; “Both of them could trot out logic on a nice little leash, wearing a smart plaid jacket, when they wanted to” (44). The line does make sense, since it is a follow-up from description about how rational and logical the two of them are, but on the surface, the sentence is quite peculiar and nonsensical – how could one take logic on a walk? Even the word choices, such as “trot out”, “a nice little leash” or “a smart plaid-jacket” are in a way old-fashioned

and not really in line with the mystical atmosphere or the setting of the story. However, by having these nonsensical sentences scattered around the narrative, the reader cannot know which of them to read literally and which of them to interpret as metaphors.

It should be noted that additionally Noah's coldness does occur on the page later in the story, not only in his first appearance. Much further on, Blue notes how Noah seems to always be cold, which Noah admits to be true (240). In this way the narrator reminds the reader that Noah's hands being cold in the beginning of the story was not a coincidence or caused by the weather, but a constant description of him.

4.1.2. The description of Noah by the other characters and by the narrator

Even more so, the descriptions of Noah's way of being and moving are rather clear instances of foreshadowing that upon rereading the story, it might seem weird not to have noticed them in the first place – again returning to the characteristic writing style. To continue from Noah's first line of dialogue, the way he looks like and the way he acts are clear instances of foreshadowing. However, as they are surrounded by the particular writing style as discussed above, the author has been able to drop the foreshadowing signs in the narrative with them not being noticed by the reader. These signs are present in dialogue, inner monologue and in the narrative, quite often surrounded by flowery writing style – which is to be expected in a Maggie Stiefvater novel.

To begin with, the words used for Noah's appearance are not quite something one would normally describe their friend with. Noah is described as always "little grumpy" (47) and that there is "something out of place about his clothing" (47) which both build on to him having been a ghost for the past seven years. Therefore it can be noted that his appearance is noticed by the characters to be different, even if they do not ponder on it too much. Furthermore, when they do think of his rumpled, faded appearance, it is described as normal for Noah, and even as familiar (96). To build on, when Blue first sees Noah, her inner monologue of his appearance is as follows: "[Noah looked] smudgy, with a rumpled, faded look about his person, like his body had been laundered too many times" (61), yet again noticing his ghost-like appearance, not only from his coldness, but from his general look as well.

This builds on to the next part of Noah's characterization. Even his laughter is described as breathy and almost soundless (186) and it adds to his ghostliness; he is later described to be, in

a way, a lesser version of what he used to be (305). That way his nearly soundless laugh is explained by him being a ghost and therefore insubstantial when compared to the other characters. In addition, in one scene, when Noah is working to build a ramp for a car with Ronan, the narrator describes in italics that with Noah “*working with* really meant *staring at*” (184-185). This could be interpreted as if he cannot really do anything that requires an amount of effort – such as building something – due to his slight amount of insubstantiality.

A common mention is that Noah is reclusive (47) and that he will rather stay at home in Monmouth Manufacturing than go out with the others – however, this does change in the later installments of the series, which will be discussed a little later. He is reclusive because he is a ghost and therefore not all of the characters in the story can see him, such as his own family (405). Nor did Noah come on a helicopter ride driven by Gansey’s sister to look for Glendower (195). And most noticeably Noah did not come along to the psychic reading at Blue’s house 300 Fox Way (140) – since the psychics would most likely have been able to tell that he is a ghost, especially Calla who is psychometric and can tell the past of objects or people by touching them (146).

Now, as mentioned above, a change to Noah’s reclusiveness does occur when the main characters find out about Noah being a ghost; in the sequel, *The Dream Thieves* (2012), Noah goes to a variety store with some of the other characters. In the scene he holds a glitter snow globe on the aisle when his energy disappears and he flickers out (TDT 72). However, the store clerk who has been watching them pays no attention to the fact that a person vanished into thin air, instead focusing on the mess that the fallen snow globe has made. In addition, the fact that Noah is only visible to a handful of the main characters, can be seen in the fourth book of the quartet, *The Raven King* (2016), as a new member of the friend group is introduced. Whenever he talks about becoming friends with them, he is only mentioning Gansey, Adam, Ronan and Blue (TRK 256, 267) – never Noah.

Returning to Noah’s descriptions in the first novel, one especially ghostly one is as follows: “Gansey became aware that Noah was lurking at his elbow . . . Noah continued to hover” (69). To say “became aware” suggests that Noah, as mentioned, appeared out of nowhere. In addition, to “hover” is usually said when talking about ghosts, not people. Although, this could be explained by the characteristic writing style of the author, filled with sometimes nonsensical word choices and descriptions; such eyebrows described as angry (120), journals wanting more words (84), or

cars speaking German (9) – none of these are literal. Instances as such relating to Noah can be found throughout the novel, such as when Gansey suddenly “realises [that Noah] had drifted from his room” (164). In the sentence the narrator, yet again, uses peculiar words to describe Noah’s moving – or more so appearing – from one place to another. These recurring descriptions often pass by unnoticed and seem like a part of the figurative language of the narrative – rather than as if they are describing Noah literally.

To continue, one night when Noah – yet again – *appears* to another character’s side, the introduction is as follows: “[Noah looked] pale and insubstantial in the yellow, late-night light of the room behind him; the skin beneath his eyes was darker than anything. He looked less like Noah than the suggestion of Noah” (91). When Noah is described as pale and insubstantial – the connection to ghosts is yet again made, even more clearly than before. When he is said to be dark compared to the bright light behind him, that could again be seen as a metaphor for ghosts, and that way as a sign of foreshadowing. The light behind Noah leaves him in a shadow, and according to Sharpe the presence of one in literature is never an accident but added on a purpose, as shadows in fiction are always optional, and by bringing them to attention, the narrative hints at particular signs (3). When, in the abovementioned quotation, Noah is said to look more like a “suggestion” of himself than anything else, the foreshadowing is there; ghosts in *The Raven Cycle* are more like memories or shadows of the person, rather than the person themselves. This comes up after the revelation of Noah being a ghost, when he tells Blue that he was “more” when he was alive (305), and that he is a lesser version of what he used to be.

However, even though the characters often describe Noah with peculiar words as described above, the first time that they themselves – not the suspecting reader – actually bring up that there is something weird about Noah only comes up near the middle of the book. In the scene Gansey and Ronan are talking about some of the other supernatural things going on in Henrietta: ““There’s what, Ronan?” He said, “This thing with Chainsaw and the psychic woman, and just, with Noah, and I just think there’s something strange going on” (164). The fact that the mention of there being something weird about Noah comes in the same breath as the peculiar newly found bird pet and the psychics who seem to actually be good at their job, could raise some eyebrows. In addition, right after this scene with Gansey and Ronan, Gansey has even more uncanny inner monologue about Noah: “Something about Noah’s uneasy face reminded him of the frightened faces

surrounding him, hornets on his skin, the sky blue as death above him. A long, long time ago, he'd been given another chance" (165) which refers to Gansey's backstory. As a child, seven years ago, he was stung by hornets and nearly died, but was let to live because someone else on the ley line (sources of magic in the form of connecting paths) was dying, too (271). Later on, it is revealed that the other character was Noah. However, this above-mentioned quotation already foreshadows the reveal – and makes one wonder why would Noah suddenly remind Gansey of that day seven years ago.

Lastly, at one point in the novel, one of the characters, Ronan, goes missing. Noah is allowed to stay behind from the search for him, however, once Gansey has found Ronan, Noah does suddenly appear – again in the middle of a scene:

““Her name's Chainsaw,” replied Ronan, without looking up. Then: “Noah, you're creepy . . . back there.”

In the deep, shadowed entrance of the church, Noah stood silently. For a second, all that seemed to be visible was his pale face; his dark clothing invisible and his eyes chasms into someplace unknowable. Then he stepped into the light and he was rumped and familiar as always” (95-96).

Again, Noah is described as creepy, pale and partly invisible – ghostly, so to say. Although in this particular scene it can be explained away as due to the darkness of the setting and Ronan's words on him looking creepy before continuing to the description by the narrator. This brings us to the literal shadows and moves us forward to the power of paragraphs.

4.1.3. Paragraph changes as foreshadowing in Noah's plotline

The power that first sentences in paragraphs have in the plot-development of narrative (Toolan 2009) do play a part in *The Raven Boys*, as paragraphing is a literary device for drawing the reader's attention, and it is used by the author on multiple occasions. Paragraphing is always characteristic to the author's writing style, and therefore even though paragraphing draws attention to the re-orientation of the narrative and the development of the plot (Toolan 2009), a reader cannot be sure

if the paragraphing is instead used for aesthetic purposes. Since a Stiefvater novel is in question, both are possible.

An example of the paragraph changes used for drawing attention towards foreshadowing in Noah's plotline can be seen in the following quotation including the last sentence of a paragraph, and the first sentence of the following one:

“[Gansey] wasn't certain of the specifics, but he was sure death was involved.

Noah stood in the doorway to his room . . .” (157).

The paragraph change is clearly a piece of literal foreshadowing; a character mentioning death at the end of a paragraph, and then Noah the ghost being right at the beginning of the next one. In here, the narrator draws attention to Noah, but then makes the reader focus on the surrounding plot of the scene instead; it turns out that death was not involved in the scene but instead the pet raven. In this way the narrator has placed a foreshadowing of Noah being a ghost by first drawing attention to it with the paragraph change, but then making the reader focus on the scene at hand instead.

To tie together both the paragraph changes and the characteristic narrative (see chapter 4.1.1), the following quotation uses both methods of foreshadowing:

“[“Don't you feel?”] Adam struggled to put his thoughts into words. Finally, he replied: “Observed.”

Across the parking lot, Noah had finally emerged from Nino's and he slouched toward them. In the Camaro, Ronan's silhouetted form lay back in the seat, head tilted as if he slept. Close by, Gansey could smell roses and grass mowed for the first time that year, and farther away, he smelled damp earth coming to life beneath last year's fallen leaves, and water running over mountain crooks where humans never walked” (77).

Again, the topic of the characters' conversation in this scene is not actually Noah. However, by switching to the next paragraph in which Noah is slouching towards them right after the word-choice “observed” (which is a similar adjective to descriptions on ghosts and spirits in the novel

(241)) is another drawing of attention, a foreshadowing about Noah, by the narrator. However, the way the second paragraph quickly moves on from Noah to describing Ronan and even the ambience of the setting in detail instead, the narrator again uses “irrelevant” information; details and surplus (Morson 47) to take the reader’s attention away from the foreshadowing right after it, which leads the analysis into the next section about time.

4.1.4. Noah’s foreknowledge of events

After it has been revealed that Noah is a ghost, one might assume that it is the end of that storyline. However, it is not. There are some signs of foreshadowing throughout *The Raven Boys* about Noah which do not get explained after his ghostly reveal. Instead, the reader needs to finish the whole *Raven Cycle* in order to understand Noah’s character – at least almost, since he is a rather ambiguous one still at the end of his story arc. An interesting point about foreshadowing in Noah’s storyline is that he can be compared to another story which uses foreshadowing metafictionally.

The said story is Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, as mentioned in Morson’s book (58). According to Morson, the play of King Oedipus is such a well-known story that whenever it would be performed, the whole audience would know the ending before the actors would even say the first line (59). This, then, allows the story to have foreshadowing scattered across the plot; the main character King Oedipus does not know what he will face at the end of the story, but the audience does know and therefore picks up on all the signs towards it that go unnoticed by King Oedipus himself, but not by Tiresias, a side character. Tiresias is knowledgeable on King Oedipus’ future and is able to draw events from past “better than any living person” (Morson 59) but throws signs of the future to the side even if he sees them. Noah is similar to Tiresias, drawing events from different times, and even being knowledgeable on future events, even though neither of them explains the past or future to the other characters in their respective stories.

To further compare *Oedipus the King* to *The Raven Boys* and more so to Noah, the similarity is there. In *The Raven Boys*, one of the main characters – Gansey, who could be seen as the King Oedipus character – had nearly died seven years previously after being stung by bees, but he was left to live because someone else on the ley line was dying, too (271). As we later find out, this character was Noah who then became a ghost. Noticeably enough, when Gansey tells this story of his to Blue, they are actually walking on the ley line and are just about to find Noah Czerny

on it (273). Which then leads to them realising that Noah is a ghost, just as he had been telling them for the past year.

As does King Oedipus face an ending foreknown by the audience and Tiresias, so does Gansey face one in *The Raven Cycle*. Right from the beginning the psychics of 300 Fox Way, Blue along with them, are knowledgeable on this prediction or fate (16), seemingly as the only ones. However, Noah, as is revealed in the last installment of the series, knows Gansey's future as well just due to different reasons than the people of 300 Fox Way. Noah is not psychic but actually in a backwards – or sideways – timeline compared to the others. Therefore, he knows things from the future, and can then keep the events running. For example, by making sure the characters find their next hints in their search for Glendower. In addition, he knows things – such as other characters secrets that they have not told him. This is even mentioned by the characters in the story, as Gansey points out that “Noah is good at finding things” (92).

Small moments including Noah's foreknowledge of events are scattered throughout the story. In one scene near the beginning Noah is at the diner Nino's with his friends when suddenly one of them, Ronan, has left the table and disappeared, and after a while Noah tells the others that Ronan is outside in the parking lot with his brother (69). Noah was never said to having gone outside to see where Ronan had gone, nor was the parking lot visible through the windows. However, this is never specified further, since the scene continues forward, the narrative yet again skimming over the piece of foreshadowing. Another moment such as the previous one occurs after one of the main characters Adam has sent Blue a bouquet of flowers without mentioning it to any of the others (181). Still, Noah knows about it without explaining why, even when asked: ““How did you know?” Adam demanded, more mortified than curious. Noah merely smiled in a far-off way. He kicked one of the wooden boards off the plywood, looking triumphant” (185). In this case the sign of foreshadowing is hidden by the narrator describing that the other characters are not really curious to understand why Noah would know something without having been told, and by the scene continuing on, yet again adding details and surplus in order to hide the foreshadowing sign.

However, the foreshadowed timeline comes across especially in moments in which Noah points the others towards a next hint of their story, knowing the events needing to take place in order for the friend group to grow, for example. Back in the beginning, it is Noah who had let

Gansey leave his Glendower research journal back at the diner Nino's where Blue works at (110). This then lead Blue to read the journal and finding out about their quest, then asking to be a part of it (192). On another occasion, when Ronan has gone missing – which was discussed in chapter 4.1.2 – it is Noah who tells the others to look for him in the church (91), as if he knew Ronan would be there, even though Ronan had not told anyone where he had gone.

Another clear occasion takes place nearing the end of the mystery of Noah being a ghost, when the whole friend group goes to explore Cabeswater. The others are slightly hesitant of stepping into the woods, so Noah is the first one to enter (242). This way making sure they find the magical abilities of the forest. Additionally, after the group has been walking in the woods for an hour, Noah suddenly *appears* (yet again) on another side of a rocky area, willing the others to come over (244). There, he shows them a well-weathered stone with faded writing on it. The message turns out to have been written by one of them, Ronan, and it advices them to speak to the trees of the woods in Latin (245). This is an important point in the story; a new and well needed clue and advice to follow in on their quest for Glendower. This is all thanks to Noah, who again leads them on the right track.

Noah's role on keeping the quest at a steady pace, however, goes slightly unnoticed, since the characters themselves mention how after meeting *Blue* the quest has a snowballing effect. This again rounds back to the surplus and the narrative style, as well as authorial intention, each of which is there for both aesthetic purpose and for hiding the foreshadowing signs from being too clear.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this thesis, the aim was to study the use of foreshadowing as a device for narration in the novel *The Raven Boys*, and the book turned out to be a wonderful example on the subject. The analysis focused on one of the main characters, Noah Czerny, and his characterization and plotline written in the narrative in the form of foreshadowing. As the analysis found, most of the signs of it in his story arc are well hidden, and upon a reread it is interesting to notice how the author uses different kinds of methods for both bringing them up and hiding them in plain sight. Some of the places in which foreshadowing was often present were dialogue, changes in paragraphs, descriptions about Noah, and scenes in which Noah moved the plot or was aware of things he had not been told about. Methods for hiding the signs of foreshadowing, then again, included descriptive writing style and surplus surrounding the signs, quick movements away from the signs to unrelated details, or the foreshadowing appearing so plainly or literally in the text that the reader skims over it.

For future research ideas on the topic of the thesis, it would be interesting to expand the research into the whole *Raven Cycle* quartet since it truly is littered with foreshadowing, and some of the off-handed mentions in the first book – such as Ronan’s reaction to finding Cableswater – are literal foreshadowing signs for the later books in the series. That way, it could be interesting to analyse the foreshadowing aspects in the series as a whole. Another future research idea could be to look at the metafictionality in *The Raven Cycle*; in addition to foreshadowing there are other nods towards the fictionality of the story both from the narrator’s commentary and even slightly from the characters, such as the catchphrase of nothing being a coincidence in the events of it. On a different manner, the residents of 300 Fox Way, Blue’s home, could be an interesting aspect to study, from either the point of view of character analysis or the theory of femininity.

In conclusion, foreshadowing does provide an interesting viewpoint and quiddity to analysing the narrative, and this thesis has discussed both the connections that foreshadowing makes and the reasons why foreshadowing is difficult to see.

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