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The Colorsong Prophecy: Using Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences to Develop Hero Archetypes for a Young Adult Fictional Fantasy Series Aimed at Promoting a Mythology of Nonviolence

Danielle Selyse Shylit

University of Massachusetts Boston, dannishy@aol.com

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THE COLORSONG PROPHECY:
USING GARDNER'S THEORY OF MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES TO DEVELOP
HERO ARCHETYPES FOR A YOUNG ADULT FICTIONAL FANTASY SERIES
AIMED AT PROMOTING A MYTHOLOGY OF NONVIOLENCE

A Synthesis Project Presented

By

DANIELLE SELYSE SHYLIT

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2002

Critical and Creative Thinking Program

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Approved as to style and content by:

[REDACTED]

Peter Taylor, Associate Professor
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

[REDACTED]

Nina Greenwald, Visiting Professor
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

[REDACTED]

Peter Taylor, Faculty Advisor
Critical and Creative Thinking Program

ABSTRACT

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December 2002

Danielle Selyse Shylit, B.A., Connecticut College
M.A., University of Massachusetts Boston

Directed by Peter Taylor

This synthesis explores the value and possibility of using Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences Theory to inform the development of hero archetypes for use as protagonists in my original fictional fantasy series entitled *The Colorsong Prophecy*. These seven books, in the process of being written, are intended to provide adolescent readers with strong hero models that mirror the intellectual diversity of their own population and promote a new mythology of nonviolence that depicts nonviolent choices as mighty in their own right. I relate this literary work-in-progress to the foundational theories upon which it is based, examining the relevant literature from the domains that investigate the human experience – Psychology, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Folklore, and Education. Theoretical works considered include Gardner's (1983) *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* along with his subsequent books on MI Theory, Kohlberg's (1980) *Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education*, Campbell's (1949) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and Jung's (1969) *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Later, I explore the essential elements of good fiction, identify the target audience for this literary work-in-progress, and present examples of the manifestation of these theories by examining excerpts from and plans for the first book of *The Colorsong Prophecy*, and by discussing the development of the six subsequent books. Lastly, I reflect upon the creative process of writing these fantasy novels, and communicate my hopes and plans for the future completion of *The Colorsong Prophecy*. Sample chapters from the first book are included in the Appendix of this paper.

DEDICATION

This synthesis is dedicated to all my students –past, present, and future –for helping me to understand the needs and motivations of young people, and to Morgan Smyrl for his generosity of spirit.

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CHAPTER ONE

A PROPHECY'S INCEPTION

The Colorsong Prophecy

One moon shone alone in ancient skies when dragons ruled the land.
Spellsongs sounded, sweet and clear, and tranquil breezes feather-fanned
The colors into brilliant hues as rainbows shimmered with the tune.
Grand Prys Maren basked in light, and all was fair 'til Shadow's hand
Ascended from the deepest dark and stole the silver from the moon.
Nights grew silent... eerie... still, for Shadow's loathsome sway soon spanned
From every curl of ocean wave to every grain of desert sand.

Two rulers dueled in dusky doom, pronouncing vows to claim the night.
The Dragon Queen defended peace with Magic, harnessing the Light.
The Lord of Shadows brandished fear, commanded doubt, and spattered rage.
On Moon --now dark --his fortress loomed to cast ill shadows from such height
That he might blacken land and sea, but Gondra proved the stronger mage.
She swept her scepter through the sky, its shining crystal glowing white
Illuminating land and sea, inciting Shadow's instant spite.

Three days and nights the war-storms roared with flashes flaring, shadows steep
The battles screamed through sickened air, and not a living soul did sleep.
Until, at last, in one great blast, the Dragon Queen encountered death.
But Shadow's might was not to blame! She sacrificed herself to keep
Her promise to protect the land. She uttered charms with her last breath.
The scepter shattered, white light glared, and Shadow fled into the deep.
The land was safe, but Gondra's death would cause the Dragonfolk to weep.

Four worlds of dragons gathered on the mount to mourn their valiant Queen.
The Dragons of the Thunder, Fire, Wind and Rain revered the scene.
Dawn through dusk through dawn they wailed with grief and shed their crystal tears,

Which blanketed the rugged peaks. The mountain glistened with a sheen
So bright that Shadow could not rise. The dragons strove to conquer fears
And pooled their magic breaths to cast the mountain to the sky between
The orbit of the moon and land, and there the dragons can be seen.

Five times races rose to claim the throne that once was Dragon led.

With dragons gone to Gondra's moon, the tensions grew and conflict fed
Distrust among Prys Maren's lords as each race sought to crown its kin.

Where once the people treasured peace, now vile contention reared its head.
Soon centaurs, changelings, pixies, elves, and dwarves would war, yet none would win.
They shunned the Light and quarreled on for naught until the peoples fled
To distant corners of the land to build their Provinces instead.

Six long ages since have waned and with them, knowledge, creed, and lore.

The wind's bereft of Magic's song and rainbows paint the sky no more.

The races keep to their own kind, in far-flung Provinces and yet
In secret, still, some sages kindle Magic's Light from days of yore.

A day will come when Shadow roils again and we must not forget
The honor of Prys Maren's past. It's time to let our spirits soar
And summon from among our youth those heroes we've been waiting for.

Seven sages searching scrolls have read the scores of sea, and sky,
And clay, and stone, ice, fire, and sand. For neither blood nor anger's cry
Maquently represent the melody of courage true.

Those who differ must agree. New dreams are visions. Heed your eye,
And trust the rhythm of your heart, remembering when war-storms blew.
Through wisdom's wind I go to seek where silenced spellsongs latent lie.
Spectral sparks for spirits vie! Oh, let these songs yet sing or die!

(from *The Colorsong Prophecy* by Danielle Shylit)

Once upon a recent time, I traveled to Italy and France on my honeymoon. My
husband and I immersed ourselves in the art, culture, and romance of Europe, then

boarded a Wagon-Lit (private night train cabin) to catch a plane back to the United States, back to the intense world of work, graduate study, and teaching. I could not sleep. Steeped in the study of Critical and Creative Thinking, my dream-infused imagination teemed with activity. Academic theories, class discussions and activities, experiential learning, personal beliefs, raw emotion, and creative ideas percolated freely in my mind, at once combining in concert and colliding in juxtaposition. So, it wasn't the jarring rock of the train car on the tracks that kept me from slumber. It wasn't the hot, dry air from the near-ancient heating system or the cramped, odd-shaped bunks that prevented sound rest. It was this one little idea, spinning and spinning and gathering up the pieces of other ideas until it became a full-fledged, gyrating twister of creative and theoretical debris.

The Colorsong Prophecy was born.

The Colorsong Prophecy would grow, over the subsequent semesters of graduate study, into a proposed fictional fantasy series for an audience of young adolescents with a sincere thirst for fantasy and a need to identify with a hero who is somehow like them.

These novels would take young readers to a world called Prys Maren, a land of fantastical flora and fauna, and many different races of sentient beings drawn loosely from various cross-cultural mythologies. Prys Maren is in a Dark Age because Light Magic, the magic of creativity, has been forgotten. The only brand of magic still palpable in this world is Shadow Magic, used only towards evil and destruction. There is a prophecy that the illumination necessary to recreate Light Magic can be found only in the true colors of

seven souls, each of the colors combining in a unity to create a brilliant radiance that will bring new understanding to Prys Maren.

The Colorsong Prophecy would consist of seven books, each an adventure unto itself, and each book would have an unlikely young hero, each a member of a different race, and each hero strongly gifted in one of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, one under-prized by their own race's culture (Gardner, 1983). Each hero's story would be written from the third person point of view limited to that character and would take us through their personal journey, highlighting their individual quests to restore creative magic to the world. These are special young people who follow their own paths of honor, demonstrating wisdom, courage, and compassion. Without each of their colors shining and distinct voices sounding, Light Magic is lost.

Individual heroes would approach the world in different ways, from different cultural views, from disadvantaged positions. Drawing from Howard Gardner's work on Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory, these heroes would become models for the multiple intelligences, essentially becoming archetypes for the ways in which people are gifted. Their language would reflect their MI strengths, and their adventures and experiences would be inherently unique. The heroes will include an Artist (Visual/Spatial), an Athlete (Bodily/Kinesthetic), a Mathematician (Logical/Mathematical), a Musician (Musical), a Healer (Naturalist), a Poet (Verbal/Linguistic), and a Facilitator (Interpersonal). The eighth intelligence (Intrapersonal) will manifest in all the heroes as

each follows his or her own journey of self-discovery. In these books, I hope to explore the ways in which each of the multiple intelligences can reach out to readers with its unique voice. (Gardner, 1983)

These voices, though diverse in gender, culture, and intellectual style, will communicate a unified message. Through the conscious and challenging choices each character makes when confronted with the forces of Shadow, adolescent readers will gain insight into the power of nonviolent responses to violence and aggression. These stories would pulse with purpose; they would strive to facilitate adolescents' understanding by allowing them to explore the values of diverse approaches to conflict resolution and problem solving as they are synthesized and understood in relation to self.

I seek to release the power of *The Colorsong Prophecy* as a work of verbal art communicating through its created diverse characters, and I have hopes that time and readers will prove its worth in encouraging young people to seek and acknowledge those precious and unique gifts within themselves, and to engage in critical and creative thinking dispositions through their identification with these heroes. In this synthesis, I intend to: relate this literary work to the foundational theories upon which it is based (Chapter 2); explore the manifestations of these theories by examining excerpts from and plans for the first book of *The Colorsong Prophecy* and by discussing the development of the six subsequent books (Chapter 3); and, reflect upon the creative process of writing these fantasy novels and my hopes for the future completion of this immense project

(Chapter Four). For those who wish to experience *The Colorsong Prophecy* in more depth, I have included the first two chapters of the first novel of the series, *Violet Verse*, along with a narrative summary of the rest of the book, in the Appendices of this paper.

Please join me on this journey as I travel through the critical thinking milieus of study and research, and the creative thinking of inventing a fantasy world. Mine is a joyous experiment in using the preeminent academic analyses of the domains that investigate the human experience – Psychology, Philosophy, Anthropology, Sociology, Folklore, and Education – to, at once, a practical and fantastic end. Now, perhaps more than ever before, young adolescents need guidance in seeking the ways in which they, like the heroes of fiction and mythology, might change their world for the better. They need to know that they can be powerful without giving in to the violence that profoundly influences their young lives. I invite you to entertain the possibility of a new mythology of nonviolence in the concepts that drive *The Colorsong Prophecy*. Let the adventures begin!

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR *THE COLORSONG PROPHECY*

fiction

Pronunciation: 'fik-sh&n

Function: noun

Etymology: Middle English ficcioun, from Middle French fiction, from Latin fiction-, fictio act of fashioning, fiction, from fingere to shape, fashion, feign

Date: 14th century

1. a : something invented by the imagination or feigned; specifically : an invented story
b : fictitious literature (as novels or short stories)
2. a : an assumption of a possibility as a fact irrespective of the question of its truth
b : a useful illusion or pretense
3. a: the action of feigning or of creating with the imagination
(an excerpt from Merriam Webster's Online Dictionary: www.m-w.com)

Fiction need not be based on theory. Imagination and invention are the defining characteristics of the art of fiction, and the reasons for writing fiction are as varied as the stories, both potential and realized, themselves. So why consider the theoretical foundation of a proposed work of fiction? In response, I wish to highlight one of the definitions listed above. Fiction is “a *useful* illusion or pretense.” Good fiction, I believe, has the capacity to serve many educational, philosophical, psychological, and cultural needs in the lives of adolescents today. In this chapter, I seek to illustrate the potential power, relevance, and value of *using* fantasy fiction as a vehicle for addressing these needs by exploring the theoretical support from the writings of the scholastic disciplines of education, philosophy, psychology, and literature as they relate to my own purposes in writing *The Colorsong Prophecy*.

The Educational Power and Authenticity of Fantasy Stories

In order to better understand the ways in which fantasy fiction can be used effectively towards addressing educational, philosophical, psychological, and cultural needs, it is important to understand the ways in which such stories have powerful effects on their readers. Stories are narrative education. They excite imagination, foster intellectual growth, and provide insight into the reader's own beliefs and ideas. Stories lend meaning and context to the dynamic interaction between our inner thoughts and feelings and the outside world. While the experience that adolescents gain through reading good fiction lies purely within the realm of their imaginations, the education they receive from stories is quite real. William Kilpatrick, a professor of Education at Boston College, discusses the powerful learning that can occur while immersed in a book.

Just as a child learns from real experiences, he can also learn from vicarious ones – and far more safely. Through books he can experience revelations that might not come to him until much later in the normal course of events: revelations of fear, of failure, of love, of understanding. What's more, reading provides a sort of mental rehearsal for the time when he encounters these experiences first hand. (Kilpatrick, 1994)

This learning potential is only realized when a reader truly engages with a story. Thankfully, there are few phrases that absorb the attentions of young children as quickly as “Once Upon a Time....” As children mature and become teenagers, and ultimately adults, their relationship with stories grows along with them.

Without minimizing the difficulties of some teens' lives, books that show a protagonist handling problems give the readers ideas on how to work through the difficulties of their own lives. More important, stories that feature teens allow the readers to live vicariously in a wide world of experience that they need not actually try. In the same way young children and other adults live the lives of the protagonist in books, teens expand their own lives through the lives of such heroes. (Crook, 1998)

What makes stories so alluring? As human beings, telling stories is an integral part of our existence. We communicate the events of our lives through narratives, and figurative language allows us to create new meanings and dimensions for words as the world around us changes and as we grow as individuals. Stories predate written language and were the main means of conveying important information in many ancient cultures. Even in modern times, stories provide us with insight into the binary contrasts inherent in culture – good /evil, nature/ culture, male/female, secular/sacred, young/old. Structuralist anthropologists believe that these stories are powerful to us because we are predisposed to connect with these contrasts, and we are eager to relive their interplay in various representations. (Harris, 1991) In *Teaching Kids to Care: Exploring Values through Literature*, Warren Lewis writes:

Hearing and reading stories is an age-old way of imparting, sharing, and reliving in a personal and vicarious way, the meaningful experiences in the world imagined by the author. When we read stories, we are in essence enlarging and dramatizing our own lives – we are participating in a life-informing and life-transforming endeavor. (Lewis, 1994)

This “life-transforming endeavor” can be even more powerful in the realms of fantasy. Most fantasy fiction features young heroes who embark on exciting adventures through unknown worlds. Because the worlds are created of the author’s imagination, they are as new and unknown to the reader as they are to the hero. Susan Cooper, an award-winning author of children’s and young adults’ fantasy writes:

Fantasy, unlike real life, offers amazing adventures with no price tag; all you have to do is open a book. And afterwards, if one of its adventures does happen to overtake you, somewhere in your unconscious mind you will be equipped to endure or enjoy it. (MacRae, 1998)

Despite fantasy fiction’s chimerical settings and characters, this genre is well suited to elicit feelings and responses in readers that are quite authentic. This is due, in part, to the universal psychological themes enacted by the heroes in their quest to discover the world around them. We, as readers, willingly suspend disbelief and are open to explore feelings we might otherwise suppress if they were presented in a more real context. Christopher Vogler, a story executive for 20th Century Fox and president of the literary consulting firm STORYTECH, writes of the power of using mythic structure (the foundation of most fantasy fiction) in his best-selling book *The Writer’s Journey*.

Such stories are accurate models of the workings of the human mind, true maps of the psyche. They are psychologically valid and emotionally realistic even when they portray fantastic, impossible, or unreal events. (Vogler, 1998)

My experience as a middle school teacher has demonstrated how fantasy stories are particularly accessible to young adolescents, who are bridging the stages between the

willing whimsy of childhood and the responsibility of adulthood. Among my students over the past three years, more have chosen fantasy novels for their choice reading than books from any other genre. While I cannot discount the recent popularity of movies based on fantasy novels such as the Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling and J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* as strong influences in eliciting interest in this genre, I believe that there is a deeper reason why these books are flying off the shelves of my classroom library. Young adolescents are grappling with important philosophical questions, and they are on a passionate quest toward understanding their own and others' motivations. While they are immersed in studying the workings of the world around them, they are becoming increasingly aware of those questions to which there is no simple answer. Part of the allure of these stories, then, is their attention to these elusive and mysterious elements of personality and drive. Ellen Winner, a scholar and professor of developmental psychology at Boston College and a senior researcher at Project Zero, wrote in her groundbreaking text, *Invented Worlds: The Psychology of the Arts* (1982)

Perhaps children have an unformed, inchoate sense of the story's style, its mood, its psychological metaphors, and its underlying psychological themes. This understanding may be too vague to be picked up by the tasks devised by experimental psychologists. Nonetheless, such a glimmering of understanding may be what holds children's attention: realizing that there is something that they can not quite grasp, they may be motivated to make sense of the story. (Winner, 1982)

Fantasy fiction, in many ways, takes readers on a roller coaster ride that echoes the turbulence of adolescence itself. It is not surprising that many teens turn to the genre of

fantasy at this stage in their development. Orson Scott Card, an author of both science fiction and fantasy literature, is quoted in Cathi Dunn MacRae's *Presenting Young Adult Fantasy Fiction* (1998). In this quotation, Card explains that fantasy is about the search for identity by a...

'...romantic hero going through the adolescent phase of human life. This hero is unconnected. He belongs to no community; he is wandering from place to place, doing good (as he sees it), but then moving on. This is the life of the adolescent, full of passion, intensity, magic, and infinite possibility, but lacking responsibility. Who but the adolescent is free to have the adventures that most of us are looking for when we turn to storytellers to satisfy our hunger?'

Adolescents readily identify with these characters and exercise their developing sense of independent moral thinking by critically assessing the choices and challenges that these heroes face. In the section below, I elaborate on the use of stories to facilitate moral understanding.

Story as a Vehicle for Values Acquisition and a Catalyst for Moral Development

When adolescents read stories and identify with the characters, they inevitably create a new way of orchestrating the values presented in dissonance or concert with their own moral symphony. Through stories, they deal with the universal philosophical questions that shape their childhood understandings of who they are, where they came from, and the differences between right and wrong.

We cannot tell good stories or read good stories – stories that are full of life and meaning for us – without constructing a parallel moral universe, one that either matches our own or is in conflict with it. It is out of this affirmation or conflict that our understandings of values are generated, in part, through contact with literature. Story is the most powerful means for understanding human experience and for assigning value to it; there is no more basic vehicle for values articulation than telling a story. (Lewis, 1994)

The articulation of values and the evolution of morality are life-long,

developmental processes. Lawrence Kohlberg, a developmental psychologist at Harvard University renowned for his work in the field of moral education, conducted numerous studies at Harvard's Center for Moral Education. His extensive longitudinal research based on detailed interviews of 75 boys at regular intervals throughout their youth led him to formulate his Theory of Moral Development. In this theory, he identifies three levels of moral development, each divided into two stages. Kohlberg believes that individuals progress through these levels and the stages within these levels in sequence. The pre-conventional level of morality, most often found in children under thirteen, is typified by moral reasoning based on fear of punishment (Stage One) or promise of reward (Stage Two). The conventional level of morality, found primarily in adolescents and adults, is typified by moral reasoning based on seeking approval from others (Stage Three) or a sense of duty (Stage Four). Most adults do not progress beyond this conventional level. The post-conventional level is characterized by moral decisions based on an authentic concern and compassion for other individuals (Stage Five), and the evolution of a

conscience founded on a profound understanding and respect for universal principle.

(Barger, 2000)

Many adolescents, as supported by Kohlberg's research, are in the process of redefining their moral selves. Because Kohlberg believes that individuals are capable of comprehending moral reasoning only one stage above the stage they are currently in, and because the only way to advance in stages is exposure to dilemmas and ideas that challenge the adequacy and desirability of their current morality (Barger, 2000), it is important for teens to have access to ample opportunities for this sort of moral reflection. Literature is a safe arena in which to wrestle with understanding these new moral concepts.

As they struggle to come to grips with the moral dilemmas of daily living, adolescents test, accept, and reject various values. They grow in maturity through their personal experiences but also vicariously by reading about characters who grapple with ethical predicaments. (Dowd and Haden, 1994)

In their article "Kohlberg's Moral Development Stages in Young Adults' Choices Novels," Frances A. Dowd, an Associate Professor at the School of Library and Information Studies at Texas Woman's University, and Dawn Haden, a librarian at Joshua High School in Joshua, Texas, discuss the relevance of applying Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development to the protagonists of fiction. Dowd and Haden conducted research designed to determine the moral development stages of the main characters of novels from

the Young Adults' Choices lists, a list of novels selected by teen readers that is published yearly. Dowd and Haden then discussed the implications of their findings.

[Y]oung adults are evidently attracted to their moral personifications in print. This conclusion is grounded on two facts: (1) the titles analyzed were all selected by young adults as novels of their choice, and (2) the reasoning employed by the majority of the fictional main characters to solve their problems is the same type and level of reasoning young adults actually employ. So it would seem not only that sharing the same moral stage with their fictional counterparts enables young adults to identify with those characters, but also that moral relevancy in literary situations influences young adults in their choice of fiction. (Dowd and Haden, 1994)

These findings strongly demonstrate the relationship between fiction and moral understanding. Whether it is conscious or unconscious, adolescents have a tendency to choose stories that mirror their own moral struggles. This information is particularly important to consider as an author of fiction for young adults. In fact, Dowd and Haden go on to suggest that writers should become more aware of this tendency.

[S]ince this study indicates that the stage of moral development of the protagonists in novels for young adults seems to be a factor in their choice of reading material, the particular stage of moral development of main characters should also be a consideration in the creation, selection/evaluation, and use of fiction for this age level. For example, authors who write literature for young adults [...] should all be aware of what constitutes a realistic moral characterization of a young adult, of the level of moral development of protagonists in young adult books, and, most importantly, of the relevancy of the protagonists moral stage of development to, and its influence upon, the stage of moral development of real-life young adults. (Dowd and Haden, 1994)

I would argue that writers of young adult fantasy have much to gain from understanding the moral development stages of adolescents. This very emphasis on the

building of moral development is where the genre of fantasy excels. Fantasy stories not only depict the potent and universal binary contrast between good and evil, but they help adolescent readers define these polarities in ways that nurture their developing moral ideals. If fantasy authors understand the ways in which adolescents reason about moral dilemmas, their characters might better present situations that encourage adolescents to consider ideas that cause them to challenge their current level of moral reasoning without being too advanced in stage, and therefore incomprehensible.

While real life conflicts often do not manifest in terms of such clearly defined extremes, and the problems of our world are sufficiently complex as to create an intricate weave of moral questions, fantasy provides adolescents with an opportunity to consider the question of right and wrong in a context where they can exercise their confidence in differentiating between the two. Diana Paxson, another author of young adult fantasy fiction quoted in *Presenting Young Adult Fantasy Fiction* (MacRae, 1998), defines fantasy itself as a moral vehicle.

‘If science fiction proclaims itself “the literature of ideas,” then fantasy might be called “the literature of ethics.” These days we have gotten away from the dualistic insistence that characters be all-bad or all-good, but the foundation of a good fantasy is the conflict between good and evil forces. In fantasy, you can not only tell the difference between them, but it makes a difference which you choose.’

By using fantasy to illustrate how a character grapples with moral dilemmas, authors are taking that reader out of a specific reality-based cultural context. All who

identify with the character are equally removed from the culture in which the character's belief system is shaped. One could argue, wisely, that fantasy fiction is shaped by the belief system of the author. Nonetheless, it enables the juxtaposition of moral understanding and cultural environment in ways that diminish the specificity of the environment, and accents the ways in which these dilemmas might be approached from a universal perspective.

'At heart, the issues raised in a work of fantasy are those we face in real life. [...] In whatever guise--our own daily nightmares of war, intolerance, inhumanity; or the struggles of an Assistant Pig-Keeper against the Lord of Death--the problems are agonizingly familiar. And an openness to compassion, love, and mercy is as essential to us here and now as it is to any inhabitant of an imaginary kingdom.' (Lloyd Alexander in *Contemporary Authors*, 2001)

The authenticity of fantasy can be attributed, in part, to the universal mythological structure on which most fantasy is based. Joseph Campbell, renowned for his extensive work on comparative mythology across many cultures, writes of the Hero's Journey in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In this book, he contends that nearly all of the world's mythology is derived from one monomyth that deals with the universality of human experience. (Campbell, 1949) Christopher Vogler, in *The Writer's Journey*, discusses how authors can use this knowledge of the Hero's Journey to create stories that resonate with these universal philosophical questions and moral dilemmas.

Stories built on the models of the Hero's Journey have an appeal that can be felt by everyone, because they well up from a universal source in the shared unconscious and reflect universal concerns. They deal with childlike universal questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is good and what is evil? What must I do about it? What will tomorrow be like? Where did yesterday go? Is there anybody else out there? (Vogler, 1998)

As adolescents read, they draw closer to realizing their own moral characters, and are forced to consider these universal questions as they relate to their developing beliefs. This opportunity to practice moral reasoning is invaluable in taking steps to formulate their own values as they strive to achieve independence from their ethnic, local, and familial cultures. The characters in fantasy serve as moral models for them, and offer choices that they might not otherwise consider. It is therefore imperative that these characters model diverse alternatives to the violence and aggression that emanate from evil forces. In the next section, I hope to demonstrate the need for a new interpretation of the monomyth: one upon which a new generation can build the foundation of their values.

Alternative Enculturation through Fiction –A New Mythology of Nonviolence

Our culture needs literature that models creative and effective responses to violence and aggression. With the sheer horror of recent violent events in the United States still fresh in our minds, the time seems overripe for providing young people with

dynamic characters who are committed to the strength and power of nonviolent alternatives to conflict resolution. In most adventure stories, the “good guys” win by overpowering their “enemies” through equally violent means. This is evident in all venues through which stories communicate, but is most apparent in the television shows and movies that so readily engage young minds. Literature, however, is not immune to this phenomenon.

This mindset focuses on the tale of good conquering evil, not with goodness, but with superior violence. We are so conditioned to accept this view of the power of violence that we don't quite have a framework to see the emerging power of nonviolence. (Kanegis, 1993)

Still, we can't expect adolescents, who are profoundly aware of the existence of violence in our world, to engage in disinfected versions of the same stories. We must respect a young person's developing understanding of justice and moral reasoning by demonstrating how courage and power can be communicated through challenging feats of nonviolence. Arthur Kanegis, the founder of Future WAVE: Working for Alternatives to Violence in Entertainment, explains the need for nonviolence to be portrayed as, not only efficacious, but mighty in its own right.

What is needed is not the same old story with the violence sanitized. Kids do know there is violence out there in the world – even right at home and in their schools and neighborhoods. What they need are the tools of good conflict management and resolution. They need new role models to show the way to a greater power than violence. They need new kinds of “beyond macho” heroes of both sexes and all races. (Kanegis, 1993)

I believe adolescents are drawn to stories containing violence because they are striving to understand it. Evil is fascinating to all of us, but adolescents are predisposed to entertaining what they deem to be forbidden ideas and representations in their struggle for independence and a unique identity. Again, this might be another example of how young people are attracted to those stories that tease the limits of their experience and familiarity. Teens need safe arenas in which to explore the rebellious sides of their personalities. Stories that attempt to preach or ignore this need for testing the boundaries are likely to be dismissed by many adolescents as boring. In *Old Lies Revisited: Young Readers and the Literature of War and Violence (1991)*, Winifred Whitehead discusses the intrigue of evil.

We cannot wish this away by disapproval or censorship, or refuse to acknowledge the need that young people have to explore the darker side of their natures. Aggressive impulses are, after all, important for both survival and progress: but to these ends they need to be channeled and utilised, not either indulged or suppressed. Through story, fiction, poetry, drama, and autobiography we can explore such feelings in safety, and confront in fantasy the problems which trouble us in our own lives. (Whitehead, 1991)

The daunting task of fantasy authors is to create dynamic, dramatic, action-packed scenes in which violence is portrayed as weak in comparison to the powerful nonviolent forces modeled by characters that inspire admiration and incite the readers' passions toward a laudable cause. That is not to say that violent forces should not prove a challenge to our hero. Combating violence with nonviolence is clearly the more difficult path in real life. Young people need to see how the courage of those who take the risk of

choosing that path is rewarded, and how strength can be represented in other ways besides physical might. The more powerful the evil forces seem, the more obvious the power of the hero when she conquers them with nonviolence.

As the monstrosity of the monster is a measure of the hero's daring, so the challenge faced by children in learning constructive responses to aggression will determine their achievement of maturity. (Nimon, 1993)

These lessons can shape the real life choices that young people make in dealing with parents and peers. By creating this new rendition of the ancient and universal monomyth, we might provide our society with a new way of enculturating values and beliefs that emphasize our commitment to preserving the integrity of our world.

Since societies are composed of particular persons and groups of persons, the improvement of any society ultimately requires some form of change in the views and actions of its individual citizens. Moreover, it appears that substantive change requires not merely the learning of information, but deep social understanding and the fundamental development of self. Critical children's and adolescent literature is a tool that can be used to promote such growth for the greater good of society. (Houser, 2001)

Neil O. Houser, an associate professor in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum in the College of Education at the University of Oklahoma, explores the use of literature to enculturate values in his recent article published in *Equity & Excellence in Education*, "Literature as Art, Literature as Text: Exploring the Power and Possibility of a Critical, Literacy-Based Approach to Citizenship Education" (2001). Houser's article opens with an excerpt from Ursula K.

LeGuin's fantasy novel, *A Wizard of Earthsea*. This choice is especially interesting because it illustrates how well suited the genre of fantasy is to the task of enculturating values. While Houser cites books from other genres later on in his article, this opening excerpt, along with a description of the learning experience he shared with his own children, is offered right up front as the primary example of how meaningful literary art can spark profound learning that doesn't end with the reading of the book. Later in the article, Houser explains the role of literature in informing and developing society.

One of the most important goals of the social studies is to promote self-development and social understanding for the improvement of society at large. Because emotion is an essential aspect of human experience, arts-related approaches such as the critical use of literature can help accomplish this goal. Drawing on the power of literature to promote empathy and concern, we can extend our lessons to help students identify relevant aspects of a particular literary experience, connect this information to other situations, and contemplate the implications for their own lives as citizens within a democratic and pluralistic society. In so doing, the fundamental goals of social education will be well served. (Houser, 2001)

In order to understand fully the impact of fantasy heroes as models of nonviolence, we should explore the ways in which we build our personal identity. The next section investigates the psychological and sociological foundations of using fictional heroes to foster the development of personal identity.

The Psychology and Sociology of Character –Heroes and Personal Identity

Fictional heroes engage adolescents on both intellectual and emotional planes. They serve as profound examples of courage and compassion as they invite young people to identify and recognize these (and other) qualities in themselves.

Whether in print, on stage, or on film, the hearts and minds of children and youth can be engaged by heroes and heroines. There are lessons to be learned, hearts to be moved, and imaginations to be stimulated. (Sanchez, 1998)

Young readers experience the lessons that heroes disseminate through the subjective lens of self. By projecting their own personalities and ideals onto these characters, they are better able to introspect and understand their own identity. Within this projection, there is a tacit layering taking place. While we see the situation from the character's point of view, the character's sensory understanding becomes our own. Ellen Winner explores this concept in *Invented Worlds: The Psychology of the Arts* (1982).

We interpret experiences in terms of our characteristic way of dealing with the world, that is, in terms of our identity. The experience of literature is no exception. In many ways a literary text is a Rorschach onto which we project our own subjective view of the world. (Winner, 1982)

Stories of heroes, while they are often set in fantastical places and depict magical events, resonate with the reader's very real emotions and challenges. Heroes bolster our own confidence by allowing us to witness their trials and tribulations on their quest for humanity. Not only do we project our own identity onto these hero characters, we also

seek validation of our own motives and choices. We identify with even the most fantastic of heroes when we sense and own the feelings and motivations behind their actions, especially when these feelings and motivations resonate with our real life sensitivities.

Heroes have qualities that we all can identify with and recognize in ourselves. They are propelled by universal drives that we can all understand: the desire to be loved and understood, to succeed, survive, be free, get revenge, right wrongs, or seek self-expression. (Vogler, 1998)

All heroes that follow their hearts on their quests for realization share elements of these universal motivations. This recurring pattern of drives and desires makes up the basis of the hero's personality and defines the hero archetype. The archetype of the hero is one of the most recognized characters in dreams and stories alike. Famed psychologist Carl Jung touts the relationship of mythological universals to what he terms the collective unconscious. He writes:

The collective unconscious is the part of the psyche which can be negatively distinguished from a personal unconscious by the fact that it does not, like the latter, owe its existence to personal experience, and consequently is not a personal acquisition. (Jung, 1969)

Jung attributes the occurrence of universal characters and themes in the dreams and myths of diverse cultures to this time- and space-transcending pool of universal knowledge. Characters informed by these archetypes play out our fears and hopes in much the same as do our dreams. This may enucleate the reason why the stories that follow the path of the Hero's Journey attract the intense interest of so many people.

The repeating characters of world myth such as the young hero, the wise old man or woman, the shapeshifter, and the shadowy antagonist are the same as the figures who appear repeatedly in our dreams and fantasies. That's why myths and most stories constructed on the mythological model have the ring of psychological truth. (Vogler, 1998)

While the discipline of psychology seeks to explain the acquisition of identity in terms of universally human fears and fantasies, sociological models examine the role of society and culture in determining the identity of the individual. Even on this front, heroes can play an integral role in the development of identity by providing us with an ideal upon which to bequeath those characteristics that we have come to value through enculturation. When we identify with these heroes, we then seek to embody these characteristics ourselves as we strive to emulate the objects of our admiration. Mark Gover and Paul Conway explain this idea in their paper, "To Borrow and Bestow: Identification as the Acquisition of Value" (1997).

Cultural artifacts mediate the many layered process through which admired others are bestowed with prized qualities, qualities "borrowed back" by us in the service of enacting an identity. (Gover and Conway, 1997)

In their paper, Gover and Conway cite the support of their recent study in which they analyzed the culturally predictable patterns of children's explanations of the qualities in heroes that they admired.

Whether it is approached from a psychological or a socio-cultural point of view, it seems clear that heroes can have a profound influence on an individual's sense of self.

Our knowledge of and confidence in who we are impacts our ability to successfully realize our potential as human beings. Young people, especially, need the guidance that heroes can provide in achieving this state of confidence and ownership. Bruno Bettelheim, an Austrian-born, distinguished scholar in the fields of education, psychology, and psychiatry and famous for his work on the meanings behind fairy tales, wrote:

Today children no longer grow up within the security of an extended family, or of a well-integrated community. Therefore, even more than at the times fairytales were invented, it is important to provide the modern child with images of heroes who have to go out into the world all by themselves and who, although originally ignorant of the ultimate things, find secure places in the world by following their right way with deep inner confidence. (Bettelheim, 1989)

The “right way” for one individual adolescent is not necessarily the “right way” for his friend. Different people identify more deeply and readily with different hero characters. In the next section, I elucidate the ways in which multiple intelligences can inform the development of several diverse fantasy hero characters that in turn may inspire the vast spectrum of young individuals seeking inner confidence.

Multiple Intelligences – Diversifying the Hero Archetype

Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences Theory first appeared in 1983 in his book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. It debunked traditional

intelligence testing as inadequate because traditional IQ tests concentrated on a very limited idea of what intelligence entailed, and proposed an alternative way of looking at human intelligence as a plurality of differentiated, independently focused *intelligences* that develop at varied rates and evolve from distinct neurological patterns. Since its inception nearly twenty years ago, Gardner's theory has elicited acclaim in both academic and popular milieus, and has spawned a myriad of papers and studies in response to and support of Gardner's assertions. Gardner, himself, continues to develop his ideas through Project Zero at Harvard University, and has written several more books that further explain and discuss the implications and applications of MI Theory. Today, Gardner identifies eight intelligences as follows:

- Logical/Mathematical
- Visual/Spatial
- Bodily/Kinesthetic
- Verbal/Linguistic
- Musical
- Interpersonal
- Naturalist
- Intrapersonal

By pluralizing intelligence in this way, Gardner opens the definition of "smart" to allow its application to a variety of gifts, skills, and talents. As a result, one of the major impacts of MI Theory has been in the relationship between perceived intelligence and self-esteem. Instead of asking, "Am I smart?" the question becomes "How am I smart?" The descriptions of these intelligences are, according to Gardner, "useful fictions" for

examining those cognitive and neurological processes that, though distinct in origin, manifest primarily in concert with one another. Because these “fictions” present a new way of understanding aptitude and personality, they provide a natural structure for informing the development of diversified fictional hero archetypes that each rely on his or her prowess in a specific intelligence area to creatively resolve conflicts and overcome challenges. (Gardner, 1983)

Just as traditional IQ tests have neglected a vast array of potential ways to be smart, so, too, have traditional heroes neglected potential ways to be powerful. By diversifying the hero archetype to embody different approaches to conquering evil besides physical strength and endurance, we create new avenues for adolescents who sense their own power in that intelligence area to identify and make meaningful connections with that character. Bruno Bettelheim discusses the importance of a child’s ability to relate to the story as an individual in his hallmark work, *The Uses of Enchantment* (1989). He claims that for a story to enrich a child’s life...

[I]t must at one and the same time relate to all aspects of his personality – and this without ever belittling but, on the contrary, giving full credence to the seriousness of the child’s predicaments, while simultaneously promoting confidence in himself and in his future. (Bettelheim, 1989)

Thus, the more a reader identifies with a character, the more he sees how he, too, can overcome the obstacles and challenges in his path. By using the Multiple Intelligences as a foundation for individualizing the ways in which heroes demonstrate their power, I

am confident that these characters of *The Colorsong Prophecy* will speak to a more varied audience of young adults who will relate to them in greater depth and understanding.

While the idea for this Multiple Intelligences/Fantasy Hero connection stemmed from a moment of isolated personal inspiration on a train, it turns out that at least one other person has also intuited the potential in combining MI theory and fictional characters. As I was researching the applications of MI theory, I discovered an educational curriculum model that might serve as a potential precedent for the use of multiple intelligences to inform the development of characters in fiction. Tara Hyland writes of her experiments while working as a storyteller at the Elgin Street Public School in Ontario. There, she introduced the concept of multiple intelligences to children for the purposes of developmental assessment through the use of stories that illustrate each intelligence in the personality and actions of young characters questing to restore stories to their kingdom. Hyland explains:

The teller presents a story to the children where seven characters represent the seven intelligences. In the course of the narrative, the characters solve a task or challenge through their particular abilities. In a story for assessment purposes, the intelligences are clearly separated. Thus, one character will have an evident musical ability, another a spatial ability and so on. The children will be able to identify the characters' strengths and to key them to the corresponding intelligences in follow-up discussion. (Hyland, 1997)

She then goes on to detail the challenges of the characters and the structure of the story. She, too, uses elements of fantasy and the concept of the quest to engage the children.

In my story, seven children travel deep into the mountain to retrieve the lost book which contains the kingdom's stories. The children use their special skills to resolve obstacles in the way of their finding the lost book. Matt, with logic smart or logical mathematical intelligence, is able to move a large boulder blocking the mountain path by using a smaller rock and a long branch in an application of the lever principle; Sonia uses her picture smarts or spatial intelligence to orient herself in a labyrinth; Connor helps the other children navigate the torturous mountain paths through his bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, his body smarts; Leonora deciphers a cryptic scroll with her linguistic or word smarts and leads the children to a cave containing the book. (Hyland, 1997)

Tara Hyland's successful use of MI theory for character development clearly lends credence to my intuition that combining these ideas might prove fruitful. She, too, concluded her story with the necessity of working together to solve the problem, thus emphasizing the value of individuality and diverse approaches and solutions to problems.

In the conclusion of the story I developed for the Elgin Street class, the seven children learn to work together to bring the great book back to the village. In the process of their adventures, the characters learned more about themselves, their own special skills and the skills of each other. (Hyland, 1997)

It is, however, important to note three major differences between Hyland's story and *The Colorsong Prophecy*. The first of these is purpose. Whereas *The Colorsong Prophecy* is intended to teach primarily through the experience of identifying with hero

models, Hyland's story was composed expressly for the purpose of teaching children about multiple intelligences. It was told by a teacher/storyteller in a classroom setting, who personally modeled many of the intelligences in the performance of the tale. She followed up this performance with a guided dialogue about the characters in the story, and a facilitated discussion on multiple intelligences. The second major difference is scale. Hyland designed her story for performance in a single class session. While detailed, descriptive and varied in presentation, it was limited to the length of a short story. Each character had a defining moment in which she or he demonstrated her or his intelligence to the rest of the group by helping them overcome an obstacle. *The Colorsong Prophecy*, in contrast, will be comprised of seven different books, each delving deeply into the motivations, trials, challenges, and emotions of the featured hero character.

The third difference is more elusive. Tara Hyland's story was written to teach students *about* the multiple intelligences. As a result, the story was constructed in such a way as to stress the demonstrated differences in the strengths of each character as they traveled together on their joint quest. This construct facilitates the listener's metacognitive awareness of these differences by coaxing a "compare and contrast" sort of response. The audience for her stories was also younger than the intended audience of my work. In contrast, *The Colorsong Prophecy* is intended to be, first and foremost, a work of literary art. It is through engagement and identification with these characters and

their journeys that learning will take place. If it is written well, readers will be consciously unaware of the ways in which Gardner's theory informed its creation, and they will remain fully immersed in the drama of the story and the richness of the characterization. I don't see these books as potential classroom materials, but as potent teachers in their own right, imparting their wisdom viscerally on a more intuitive plane.

Hyland's work does demonstrate the effect of identification with these characters on the students' self images. In interviews and discussions with the students following her demonstration, she documented their understanding of and reaction to the story.

Through identification with the characters, the students were able to envision possibilities for their own lives –possibilities which included expanding their workable spectrum of intelligences. (Hyland, 1997)

Hyland's students were able to gain a better understanding of themselves and others through the process of identifying with these characters in a classroom setting on a limited level. If it is indeed the uniting of MI Theory and fantasy adventure that facilitated this understanding, then we might expect that *The Colorsong Prophecy* would similarly benefit those who read it. Moreover, I believe *The Colorsong Prophecy* would have the capacity to provide an even greater depth of understanding to those young people that are self-motivated to explore the vibrant emotions, complex psyches, and unique qualities of its heroes.

Setting the Stage for *The Colorsong Prophecy*.

I seek to soon release the power of *The Colorsong Prophecy* as a work of verbal art communicating through its created diverse characters, and I have hopes that time and readers will prove its worth as a “useful illusion or pretense” in encouraging young adults to seek and acknowledge those precious and unique gifts within themselves. Howard Gardner concludes his book, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligences for the 21st Century*, with homage paid to the arts (including literature) and humanities for their role in promoting individuality.

The sciences deal with general principles, universal laws, and broad predictions; the arts and humanities deal with individuality. We learn about seminal historical figures in their individuality; we explore the psyches of diverse (and often perverse) characters in literature; we gain from artists’ and musicians’ reflections of their own emotional lives through their works. Every time we are exposed to a new individual –in person or in spirit – our own horizons broaden. And the possibilities of experiencing different consciousnesses never diminish.... (Gardner, 1999)

And so emerges the necessary marriage of theory and practice. As a critical thinker, I have researched, probed, questioned, and ultimately synthesized the abstract theories and concrete studies of experts and visionaries alike. These synthesized understandings are the sturdy stage upon which I would set a realm of fantasy; there I would create. In Chapter Three, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which these theories

will manifest in my original literary work-in-progress, *The Colorsong Prophecy*. Please join me for a glimpse into the world of Prys Maren.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: WRITING *THE COLORSONG PROPHECY*

It is not enough to highlight the theories that guide my proposed fantasy fiction series, *The Colorsong Prophecy*. If I were to rely on theories alone, my proposed work might remain just that: some ethereal possibility for a distant future. As valid and relevant as theoretical studies may be, it is only by finding innovative ways to *use* these theories that these ideas can reach a wider audience. Theory is about the why; practice is about the how. To consider the how, I must rely mainly on my own exploration. In contrast to the extensive theoretical writings I have cited in the preceding chapter, there is a noteworthy dearth of resources on how to incorporate these ideas into a work of fiction from a practitioner's perspective. Books on the craft of writing do not address this need.

In fact, the very act of trying to achieve this goal has the potential to be problematic. Let's say that I write *The Colorsong Prophecy* to the very letter of my theoretical ambitions. I create a story that successfully introduces hero archetypes for the multiple intelligences, triumphantly depicts the strength of nonviolence, evokes the universal mythic structure of the hero's journey, and mirrors the appropriate stages of adolescent moral development. I manage to include identity-building situations in the

work, and I have characters that reach out to both genders and many cultures. If young adults do not read it, it is all for naught!

Telling stories is also an age-old method of communicating morality lessons to ensure that a point of view spreads in a palatable manner. Writing can be a way of instructing, advising, and guiding others. Most children don't want to read stories that are written with such motivation, but many writers believe that "teaching" justifies their stories. But a "moral" story isn't necessarily a good story. The danger in writing morality tales is that the writer may ignore the needs of children and write from behind a screen of righteousness that thinly hides a lecture. As you may remember from your school years, most of us hate lectures. (Crook, 1998)

It is therefore imperative that *The Colorsong Prophecy* be, above all else, good young adult fantasy fiction. To reach its intended audience, this work must first be published by professionals, and then chosen by adolescent readers. In this chapter, I first discuss the elements of good fantasy fiction for young adults and the ways in which I actualize these elements in my own writing. Secondly, I take a closer look at the intended audience for this literary work, highlighting the specific needs of this complex group of readers. Finally, I explore the ways in which I am incorporating the theories from the previous chapter so that they advance these important ideals while also enhancing the richness of the story. I do not intend to hide behind any screens.

Creating Good Young Adult Fantasy Fiction

What are the essential elements of a good young adult fantasy story? Obviously, good fantasy must first contain the basic elements of good fiction. To identify these elements, I will draw on my own experience as a writer and teacher, and consider current popular literature on writing and publishing works of fiction. In addition to those elements that are essential to all works of fiction, there are the genre specific challenges unique to writing fantasy. To address these, I will rely on the writings of experts in the domain of fantasy fiction. The deep study and continual practice of these elements of fiction are fundamental to the authenticity of my work as a potential exemplar of quality in the domain of Young Adult Fantasy Fiction.

As a middle school teacher, I teach the elements of craft to my students in their own writing, and I am well versed in both the critique and practice of creative writing. I often write along with my students, and I have always enjoyed creating original literary works. As an undergraduate at Connecticut College, I took several courses in both fiction and poetry writing. I have also researched and studied creative writing by reading many books on writing and the creative process, many of which appear in the reference section of this synthesis. I am indebted to the many writers and teachers with whom I have discussed, dissected, and distilled the elements of fiction that I recognize today as good.

One of the most important things to consider in writing good fiction is that you

must first convince publishers to publish it and readers to read it. Once a potential reader has picked up a book, it is the author's task to hook them in with a lead that captures the reader's interest. There are many techniques for accomplishing this, but the prevailing wisdom is to begin in the middle of a scene. In *Violet Verse*, the working title for the first book of *The Colorsong Prophecy*, I open in the middle of a scene that gives the reader a glimpse into the life of Dirk Goran, the protagonist of this story.

Outside the work-shed window, the last cloud of the evening hovered in a purplish wisp against the darkening sky. Both moons were new, but here and there, stars dangled like icicles from the frozen heavens. This was just the sort of magical moment that Dirk cherished. With his leather-bound journal resting open on his lap, Dirk's short, thick fingers led his plume point in a jaunty dance. Word after word, he harnessed the images of the coming night in the fervent scrawls of a young poet's passion.

"Dirk! Are you in there?"

The sharp voice pierced the young dwarf's awareness. Still clutching the quill, he flipped his journal onto the wooden floor with a dull slap, collected his sluggish limbs, and reluctantly rose. Smoke, who had been asleep at his feet, huffed a disgruntled protest.

"Dirk Goran! I hear you moving around in there! Father is furious with you. He said that if you don't come to the Gathering tonight he'll..."

Dirk unlatched the rustic pine plank door and opened it to the icy rawness of the tundra twilight. Leaning his head on the doorframe, Dirk regarded the sturdy silhouette of his sister against the starlit snow. Kelda's wiry, white hair quivered as she scolded. Her woodpecker words were fast and furious, meanings shattered in the relentless rapping. (Shylit, 2002)

Strong, descriptive language is also essential to good fiction. To conform to the current temporal culture in the domain of fiction writing, potent verbs and specific nouns should carry most of the burden in descriptive language, with adjectives playing a well-integrated supporting role, and adverbs appearing only when necessary. This next

passage from *Violet Verse* is an example of how I use strong descriptive language to depict Dirk's home village.

Soon, the icy crags and low brush of the wildlands became a paw-packed lane. Dirk and Smoke trotted through the clearing at the northern fringe of the Lupen village. Everything about this community had an air of intimacy. The low family compounds clustered around cozy courtyards, and from the center of each den the homey aromas of the evening meals curled skyward on billows of smoke and scented the crisp breeze. On most evenings, there would be an occasional clatter of spoon on kettle, and rising strains of rousing conversation would mingle with the patter of paws and the delighted squeals of the youngest dwarves at play. Tonight, although firelight danced from each open window creating flickering yellow-orange patterns on the wintry ground, a heavy hush hung over the village. (Shylit, 2002)

Another significant decision that authors of fiction must make regards the point of view. Every story has a narrator; someone's voice is behind the words that are written. When authors write stories, they must decide whether that voice is the voice of the protagonist (first person) or the voice of a third party. If there is a preference for an authorial third party, the writer must choose whether that narrator's awareness is omniscient or limited to the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of an individual character, usually the protagonist. Because I intend *The Colorsong Prophecy* to become a series of books, I have opted to use a third person limited point of view for the first six books. I believe this allows readers to become intimate with the heroes through exposure to their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in addition to experiencing the world through what they perceive. While this can be achieved writing in the first person, all the hero characters will come together in the seventh book, and for this final book, I may experiment with

switching to the third person omniscient point of view. In light of these choices, readers might lend greater credence to the seemingly objective voice of a third person narrator, and will not be jarred as much by the subtle switch of narration in the last book.

Without a main character with which readers can identify, fiction is simply a series of events. In order for readers to care about what happens next, they must have the chance to connect with the characters in the story. Because of my purposes in writing *The Colorsong Prophecy*, I have designed this work to be primarily character driven. Therefore, strong characterization is paramount in writing this piece. One way I have ensured that the protagonist of *Violet Verse*, Dirk Goran, is a character with depth and motivations is by creating a kind of personal history for him. Among my copious scribbles, I have many notes about his childhood, preferences, personality, relationships with others, and deepest desires. The more an author knows about a character, the more that character becomes true to life.

Emotional truth is vital when you're writing fantasy. Everything else is up for grabs, but your characters, and their feelings, must ring true. If they're believable, readers will accept their world, no matter how strange, and follow them through all sorts of bizarre adventures. (Tuttle, 2001)

One way to develop a character is through the use of dialogue that reveals facets of his or her personality. We learn more about a person by listening to the ways in which they interact with others. In this excerpt from the first book, readers learn about Dirk's struggle for independence by "listening" to this conversation with his father.

“Guess who stopped by today.” Tyr angled for his son’s attention.
“Dirk?”
“Huh?”
“Guess who stopped by this afternoon.” Tyr sat on the bench.
“I don’t know.” Dirk hated guessing games. “Orm Lappish?” In Dirk’s mouth, the words were distasteful. He washed them down with a spoonful of stew.
“No, but he is back from Crystal Ridge. He’ll be presenting at the Gathering.”
“I know.”
“News travels fast.” Tyr took a swallow of broth. “Actually, I was talking about Arick. He came by this afternoon to pick up his order. We chatted for nearly an hour.”
“Oh.” Dirk tried to sink one of the dumplings with the back of his spoon. It floated back up again.
“Dirk.” Tyr’s voice was taut with affected patience. “You really need to apply yourself more at the shop. Arick has just about had it with your attitude. It’s one thing to shirk your responsibilities here at the house, but it’s quite another when the community is counting on you to...”
“I know!” It came out louder than Dirk had intended. (Shylit, 2002)

In good fiction, much like poetry, language should not always be taken at face value and words and images often carry a second deeper meaning. This is called symbolism, and it can be useful in communicating with the reader on a more sophisticated plane. In the passage below, the italicized sentence was crafted to symbolize the struggle between the forces of Shadow and the forces of Light Magic; this struggle is one of the main conflicts of the book. While not all readers will consciously pick up on this intent, the symbolism is there, evoking the greater meaning while enhancing the mood of the writing.

The old dwarf's lunacy was as clear as the sky, but there was something about what Einar said that gnawed at the deepest part of Dirk's being. *The breeze rustled some dead leaves along the tree roots, and the fire responded with a clack and a spark.* The two dwarves stood frozen for a long moment. Then, a bony hand came to rest on Dirk's shoulder. (Shylit, 2002)

The plot of a book is what keeps readers wanting to turn the pages. When a book has a good story line, complete with goals, hurdles, and unexpected turns, the reader is compelled to read more to seek the outcome. *The Colorsong Prophecy* has plots within a grand plot. There is the overarching "Shadow Lord trying to dominate all of Prys Maren while the young heroes of the Light desperately try to keep the Colorsong Prophecy alive and the world in balance" plot that is the basis for the entire series, and each individual novel has its own plot based upon the quest of the protagonist. I go into greater detail about the mythic structure that serves as a framework for each of the adventures when I address the incorporation of the hero's journey.

Personal voice is one of the most elusive elements of good fiction writing, and it can be the most difficult to develop. Each author has his or her own style that readers recognize. Most writers do not set out to train themselves to use a personal voice. Instead, we often find it (or it discovers us) through the process of writing and rewriting our work. Readers of my work have told me that my style is lyrical and somewhat poetic. This meshes well with the genre of fantasy, as poetry and prose often meet in this type of writing. The first book makes good use of this style, as it is most appropriate for the poetic main character of Dirk, the Verbal/Linguistic hero. The following is a short

passage that I feel demonstrates the lyrical nature of my personal voice.

Dirk had never been to this part of the forest before. Just beyond the far bank, winter-bare birch trees stretched skyward like hundreds of slender, white hands pointing to the stars. The sheen of frost on the white bark created a mystical gleam, which softened the angles of the trees making them appear even more graceful. With no leaves to obfuscate the light, the star-studded midnight sky presided over this part of the forest with a glimmering majesty. (Shylit, 2002)

The best characterization, the most clever crafting of language, and the most dynamic dialogue lack power if a story does not contain conflict. For a character to grow, they must overcome challenges and obstacles. A story without conflict has no motion. In his book, *Conflict, Action, and Suspense* (1994), William Noble explains why conflict is so essential.

[Conflict] is the essence of story development, and whether we call it *tension*, *discord*, or a host of other synonyms, it means, simply, that the story contains someone or something struggling with someone or something and the outcome is doubt. Conflict creates drama, and it establishes the focus of the action or suspense to follow. (Noble, 1994)

In *Violet Verse*, Dirk is the “someone” who struggles with many “someones” and “somethings.” He struggles with reconciling his passion for writing, which is not valued by those he loves, with the expectations that his family and village have for him. Dirk struggles with his own shyness, as this is a highly interpersonal society. He struggles to overcome his grief for the loss of his mother at a young age. Dirk struggles in a rivalry with his older sister who always seems to do everything right. He struggles with his overprotective father in an effort to gain independence when Dirk runs away and defies

him. He struggles with deciding the right thing to do in violent situations. Ultimately, Dirk struggles with confronting the full force of Shadow itself. All of these problems are difficult for Dirk, and the reader feels the tension of the doubtful outcome.

There is another important consideration in writing good fiction in general, and fantasy in particular. Many authors do not set out to write a work on a certain theme, but all good stories have at least one, if not many, thematic elements. Lisa Tuttle, a teacher of science fiction at London University and a published author, discusses fantasy as a vehicle for theme in her book *Writing Fantasy and Science Fiction* (2001).

[F]antasy novels can be moral dramas with important themes at the same time as they are entertaining adventure stories. They are perfect vehicles for investigating big questions such as: How can society be changed for the better? What is the nature of intelligence? What does it mean to be human? Does absolute evil exist? The most memorable [...] fantasy lingers in the mind because it is about something more than just the plot – it makes the reader think. (Tuttle, 2001)

Here I segue into those elements specific to the genre of fantasy. One element that makes fantasy unique is that authors have the opportunity to create a world, complete with history, landscapes, cultures, and creatures. In fantasy, the setting is never taken for granted. In some ways, anything goes. However, it is important to remember that even the most fantastic world has to have some sort of underlying logic. This is where I have spent the bulk of my time and creativity. Over fifty percent of my notes on *The Colorsong Prophecy* are related to the development of Prys Maren, the fantasy realm in which these stories are set. I have drawn maps, composed a world chronology in the

form of a poem, outlined each of the seven cultures, and summoned creatures from my imagination and from recognizable examples from various mythologies. The landscape of Prys Maren is earthlike in many ways; there are deserts, mountains, lakes, forests, rivers, steppes, marshes, plains, islands, and seas – all arranged with attention to the flow of water and climate. There are also geological features of Prys Maren that could never exist on earth: fire fields, caverns made entirely of crystal, and a mountain cast into the sky by magical forces to form a second moon.

Once the world has been created, the author's task is to communicate the ways of this world to the readers. Because extensive passages discussing the rules of the land are boring to readers, it is better practice to let the world unfold through the action of the story.

Many fantasy stories take the form of a journey, so the reader is in the same position as the main characters –travelling through the land and discovering it, and revealing themselves at the same time. [...] Take a look at the most popular fantasy novels published in the last ten years, and you'll see that background description is integrated with the action. What's important is telling the story. The reader learns more and more about the world, and about the characters, as the story progresses. (Tuttle, 2001)

As often as possible in my writing, I try to embed the information about Prys Maren in the context of the story itself. For example, in the opening paragraph of *Violet Verse*, I describe the night sky saying, "Both moons were new..." Without an explanation of the cosmology of Prys Maren, the reader immediately knows that this is not earth, and that there are two moons orbiting this world. However, because this is the first book of

seven, and because I needed this book to solidify the world for the readers, I also tried to create opportunities to accelerate the reader's receipt of the information about the world. One way I plan to do this is by writing a scene in which Dirk takes a ride on the back of a Wind Dragon. Zandor, the last of the Wind Dragons and Dirk's mentor in *WordWeaving*, takes Dirk on a tour of the lands of Prys Maren as seen from the sky. During this tour, Dirk learns of *The Colorsong Prophecy* and his role in its fulfillment. While this scene is not yet written, I believe the splendor and description of a Dragon ride will provide sufficient reason for an explanation of the lay of the land.

In fantasy worlds, you also find fantasy beings. While the hero characters evoke true-to-life human needs and emotions, none of the protagonists from *The Colorsong Prophecy* is actually **human**. Some of the races that appear in *The Colorsong Prophecy* are based on traditional fantasy races and creatures. Lupen Dwarves, the race to which Dirk belongs, share some physical and cultural qualities with the dwarves of Norse mythology. They are shorter and stockier than humans are, and they are known for their fine craftsmanship. Lupen Dwarves, however, live in aboveground "dens" in the Province of Lupen, and ride wolves. They worship the god of the Great Wolf, and, always mindful of the needs of the pack, they value community and interpersonal relations above all else. Prys Maren also has a race of centaurs, the Quiligana Healers of the Province of Coltsfoot, which is located in the Red Hills. While these centaurs are half-human and half-horse like those of Greek mythology, the Quiligana Healers are

peaceful naturalists that protect the land of Prys Maren and study the art of herbal remedies. Fairies reside in Prys Maren, as well, in the Province of Tiana located in the northeast Rowan Grovelands. The Tianese Sprites, as they are called, are known as the aestheticians of Prys Maren. Also, in addition to the races that have civilized provinces in Prys Maren, there are Wildlanders, people who live in the lands between the provinces, usually in small bands. Some of the traditional races of mythology appear here as well, such as elves, fauns, nymphs, giants, goblins, trolls, merfolk, and the rare dragon.

Other races in *The Colorsong Prophecy* are creations of my own imagination, using some elements of mythology and human experience and extrapolating on them to produce my own sentient beings. The Farasa Wanderers are one such race. These hairless people are tall and slender with bronze colored skin and yellow eyes. They are nocturnal desert nomads who wander the dunes searching for the fallen gold feathers of Griffins and spinning stories to sell at the desert border towns. Another original race is the Causaxum, beings of living stone that resemble gargoyles, who live in the Crystal Caverns overlooking Calefax Cove. They value logic and reason about all else, and they are precise engineers that build intricate machinery out of rocks, powered by crystal vibrations. The Dealdaonna are shapeshifters much like the selkies of English mythology. Instead of switching between human and seal form, however, these sea fairies can shape-change into dolphins to traverse the open seas. Like dolphins and whales, their mellifluous songs are their primary means of communication. When they

are on land, they resemble elves, except the color of their eyes changes with the color of the sea. The last of the seven major cultures in Prys Maren is the race of fire people called the Mototu. These beings rose from the flames created by the magic breath of Dragons as they cast Gondra's mountain into the sky. Legend has it that these people were once gnomes that lived underground along the base of the mountain. Because the breath of Dragons is Light Magic, the fires that raged in the aftermath of sending the mountain into orbit were intended to create, not destroy. The gnomes, engulfed in magical flames and with their once underground homes exposed to the open air, evolved into beings that could hold, wield, and shape fire. They have iridescent, scaled skin, and they have embodied the agility of fire itself. They worship the Phoenix, because they know what it is like to be reborn from the ashes. They still live in the very spot where Gondra's mountain once stood, the Fire Fields which still burn today.

In addition to the seven major cultures of Prys Maren, and the wildlanders who inhabit the expanses of wilderness, Prys Maren also has its share of evil creatures that populate some dangerous Shadow strongholds located in the swamps, caves, and dark forests of Prys Maren. These creatures are the underlings of the Shadow Lord, and are bound to do his bidding. Here, too, I combine recognizable monsters from earth mythologies and creatures of my own creation. In the low caves of the mountains in the southwest of Prys Maren, colonies of troglodytes lie in wait of unsuspecting adventurers. Swamp goblins likewise infest the marshy lands to the southeast. Both of these species

draw from already established fantasy creatures. In addition, I have created some creatures of Shadow unique to Prys Maren. Shadowings are large birds that resemble enormous ravens. These dangerous creatures are difficult to detect because their literally deafening cry absorbs all sound and their wingspans spread wide to engulf their prey in shadow, causing total darkness. Lacklusters are Shadow demons who trail their foes by pretending to be their own shadows. When the victim least suspects it, the Lackluster advances, draining the life energy from its victim and burning it to create a foul, black toxic smoke which has the potential to poison any living thing nearby. Any form of water can render the Lackluster powerless. Lastly, Iceshades are frozen shadows creatures that live in the far north of Prys Maren. They are exceptionally slow movers, but just one icy touch can freeze a person's heart.

Another important element of fantasies is the treatment of magic. Magic has its history in our own world's cultures, and it is a common facet of most societies including (gasp!) our own. In their chapter on magic in the book *The Writer's Complete Fantasy Reference* (1998), Allan Maurer and Renee Wright wrote:

From the most primitive tribes to the most sophisticated modern city, mankind believes in magic. We mutter spells (knock on wood), curse in holy names, conduct miniatnre rites (throwing spilled salt over a shoulder). So, too, in all times and places, both professional and amateur wizards, witches, shamans, and magicians attempt to discover magic's secrets. (Borcherding, 1998)

In all instances of magic, there are very specific rules that govern its use. In *The Colorsong Prophecy*, there are two brands of magic: Light magic, which is the magic of creativity, and Shadow magic, which is the magic of destruction. The workings of Shadow magic are mysterious and not entirely understood. Its strength, though, lies in the powerful motivations of the dark sides of human nature. The greed, fear, doubt, anger, hatred, apathy, and tyranny in the world feed the power of Shadow, and Shadow grows. Light magic is tied into the many ways that creativity can manifest, and each mage has a different vehicle for the magic. Dirk, our Verbal/Linguistic hero, uses magic that is enacted in his poetry. These creative forces are the antitheses of the forces of Shadow magic when the honorable qualities of vision, courage, compassion, wisdom, and generosity of spirit guide them. When each hero finds their mentor, the mentor gives them a magic item or a resource that allows the hero to focus her or his magic.

Stories about a young man or young woman learning how to become magic-users may be interpreted about **being** about growing up, and partly they are, but in that case –what does the magic stand for, in real life? Magic is a form of power, different from ordinary earthly power. (Tuttle, 2001)

I would argue that, in *The Colorsong Prophecy*, the individual gifts, talents, and skills that each hero possesses, the same kinds of gifts, talents, and skills that individuals on earth possess, are the forces that *enable* the Light magic of Prys Maren. The many diverse ways in which light magic will manifest, first as the wild magic of natural talent

and then as the skilled magic of work and study, will be organic to the world of Prys Maren and fully understandable in that context.

One final consideration in writing *The Colorsong Prophecy* is the viability of this idea as a full-fledged series of seven books. I have never written a novel before, and now I am attempting to write seven! Writing books in a series requires more attention to the big picture of the series as a whole.

If you want to write a novel over several books, you must make sure that each book is a complete and satisfying work when read on its own. Although the end of Book One should leave the reader eager for more, it must not disappoint, or feel unfinished. Some questions can be left unanswered, and plot threads unresolved, but the reader should feel that they've just read a complete novel. The second book has to be understandable and enjoyable by itself as well –it must attract readers who missed the first book, and be as accessible to them as to people who have read the first. At the same time, the filling-in of the backstory should not bore or irritate readers who have come to it from volume one. This takes a very particular skill. (Tuttle, 2001)

My intent is to design the first six books so that the action in each is taking place at roughly the same time. The way I will make this explicit for the reader is through the appearance of specific astronomical phenomena that occur in each book as a result of the Shadow Lord colonizing Gondra's moon. Readers who read more than one of these first six books will recognize these events as they occur, but will see them from different locations and perspectives. I believe that these individual stories will be satisfying adventures in their own rights since the reader follows each hero on a complete quest, and experiences the struggles and successes of each hero's story. Because there will be no

temporal sequence to these books, they will be able to be read in any order a reader chooses. The last book will take place shortly after the other six in Prys Maren's history, after the completion of the quests of the first six heroes. This book will bring all of the heroes together to recreate Light Magic and restore peace to Prys Maren.

I believe, based on my careful attention to and study of the craft of writing, that this series of books will meet the standards of quality for the domain of young adult fantasy fiction. Whether or not they are picked up for publication remains to be seen, but I have studied the conventions and specifications of the genre, and I feel that my work is a strong example of quality fantasy fiction for young adult readers. More feedback from other authors, editors, and young adult readers (my students have already been invaluable here!) on the work itself will find those areas that need improvement, and I address this need for feedback and other future plans for improving my work in more detail in Chapter Four.

The heroes of *The Colorsong Prophecy* and the human adolescents who read their stories must show their true colors to actualize their goals, whether their goals are to save Prys Maren from the Shadow Lord, or to realize their hopes and dreams. In the next section, I will take a closer look at who these readers are, and what they look for in their choice of reading materials.

My Intended Audience

Good authors know their intended audiences, and tailor their books to their readerships' specific needs. The Colorsong Prophecy is directed towards a readership of young adults, but who exactly are these young adult readers? The young adult section of the bookstore is a relatively recent addition. Prior to the 1960's, adolescents had the option of reading children's literature or reading books written for an adult audience. (Garland, 1998) Today, young adult fiction is a booming business. Teens have many more opportunities now to read books written especially for them. They often choose their books based on the age of the protagonist.

[Y]oung readers prefer to read about a protagonist a bit older than they are. An eleven year old will read about a thirteen or fourteen year old; a fourteen year old will read about a sixteen or seventeen year old; and older high school students read about adult characters in their twenties (or older). There are exceptions, but generally speaking, when you write young adult literature today, you are writing for middle school and junior high students. (Garland 1998)

The protagonists in The Colorsong Prophecy, though the actual ages of different races are developmentally different from humans, are designed to correspond roughly to the ages of high school juniors or seniors. These characters are preparing to become adults in cultures that do not yet recognize them as true citizens. It is a time of great change, great worry, and a great struggle to find themselves. These characters should appeal to young people between the ages of 11 and 15, middle school students and younger high school students. These students have many diverse needs and desires as

readers. Marion Crook discusses these needs in her trade book *Writing Books for Kids and Teens* (1998).

Teens are a collection of individuals with individual ideas, prejudices, concerns, and hopes. They want novels that give them beauty and order, hope and role models. They want to know that they are appreciated, enjoyed, loved, and needed. (Crook, 1998)

My own experience and observations as a teacher of middle school students have also demonstrated the ever-present and powerful desire of young adolescents for acceptance and recognition by both adults and peers. These young people are consistently faced with a dichotomy between their ability to comprehend the complexities of the world around them, and the ability to act meaningfully on this understanding while continuing to live the life of a child. Often, they feel they have to prove themselves to get recognition for their newer, more sophisticated ideas and more independent beliefs. Physiologically, they are also experiencing changes that profoundly affect their emotions and motivations. These powerful storms of pubescent emotion fuel new drives for independence, quests for answers, and explorations of self and the world around them. Nancie Atwell, an award-winning teacher of middle school students and an author of several well-known books on teaching, agrees in her book *In the Middle* (1998).

The stirring up of dark feelings is balanced by the awakening of new intellectual powers. Adolescents begin to go deeper into ideas – political, moral, and artistic. They're powerfully attracted to metaphorical language and layers of meaning. They glimpse shades of grey amid all the black and white that surrounded their childhoods. (Atwell, 1998)

These teens need stories that stimulate their intellects, and that, at the same time, portray conflicts and situations to which they can relate. G.R. Carlsen addresses this need in a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association called “Criteria for Excellence in Adolescent Literature” (1978). In the paper, Carlsen discusses the specific needs of this audience of readers, highlighting the need for themes that relate to adolescent concerns. These themes, such as the search for status and identity and breaking family ties, are what engage the interest of these readers.

I feel that *The Colorsong Prophecy* has tremendous potential to address the diverse needs of its intended readership by providing these young adolescents with stories that echo their own concerns about becoming independent, challenge their developing intellects with sophisticated language and ideas, and capture their varied interests with seven different, engaging tales of adventure.

How Theory Informs Practice

Now that I have discussed the relevant theories in the domains that consider human experience, and that I have explored the craft of writing fiction with particular attention to the genre of fantasy and my intended audience of young adolescents, it is important to address the ways in which these ideas manifest in counterpoint as they are synthesized into a literary work of art. While I wish these stories to be good stories

regardless of the theory behind them, I also hope that they will be better stories *because* of the theories behind them. The fact is that I *want* to create a story that successfully introduces hero archetypes for the multiple intelligences, triumphantly depicts the strength of nonviolence, evokes the universal mythic structure of the hero's journey, and mirrors the appropriate stages of adolescent moral development. I *want* to include identity-building situations in the work, and I *want* to have characters that reach out to both genders and many cultures. All of these components should accent and inform the good fantasy writing. It is through these ideas that my purpose will manifest

So, how does an author go about developing successful hero archetypes for the multiple intelligences? The protagonists of *The Colorsong Prophecy* must each first meet the criteria for being a hero, and the ways in which that heroism manifests must be tied into that hero's gifts in his preferred intelligence area. Christopher Vogler discusses the criteria for heroism in *The Writer's Journey* (1998).

People commonly think of Heroes as strong or brave, but these qualities are secondary to sacrifice –the true mark of a Hero. Sacrifice is the Hero's willingness to give up something of value, perhaps even her own life, on behalf of an ideal or a group. (Vogler, 1998)

Thus, the protagonists of *The Colorsong Prophecy* must be willing to sacrifice something quite dear to them to be truly heroic. In *Violet Verse*, Dirk offers many sacrifices in the name of ideals. Early in the book, Dirk risks both his personal safety and

the trust of his father and his community members by breaking the village-wide curfew to rescue his treasured journal from the jaws of a fox.

Step by determined step, Dirk thudded past the forge, through a corner of his neighbor's yard, into the evergreen forest at the boundaries of the village. Boughs of pine and hemlock stretched across the narrow trail above him until the stars made only occasional appearances. In the absence of sufficient light, Dirk panned. He strained against the darkness to seek any hint of silver-white fur, but there was nothing. In his stillness, he noticed the chill. What was he doing? If his father knew he was out here after curfew, he'd be in trouble for certain. He peered back through the tunnel of tree limbs at his open window. He could still make out the dim glow of the center fire, and he wondered if his father was still awake. Dirk shuddered with cold and anger. He felt violated. Alone and utterly confused, he stumbled around in slow circles. Should he go back? Could he? (Shylit, 2002)

This early sacrifice, made by Dirk to recover his journal and preserve his individuality, lays the groundwork for a more profound sacrifice at the climax of the book. When he finally confronts an agent of the Shadow Lord and quests to save the captured dwarves of his village from the agent's grasp, Dirk is forced to choose between liberating his people and rescuing both his and his mother's journals from being torn to pieces by troglodytes. Dirk's willingness to sacrifice safety and reputation for his art highlights how great his ultimate sacrifice is when he risks the fruits of his Verbal/Linguistic gifts for an even higher cause.

Another criterion for heroism is growth. It is not only the amazing feats of talent and skill that the hero demonstrates that make him heroic, but also the ways in which those experiences influence that hero to learn and grow as individuals.

Heroes overcome obstacles and achieve goals, but they also gain new knowledge and wisdom. The heart of many stories is the learning that goes on between a Hero and a mentor, or a Hero and a lover, or even between a Hero and a villain. We are all each other's teachers. (Vogler, 1998)

Here, too, we must acknowledge the need for protagonists to be recognized for their development of abilities and dispositions.

Since the story is usually seen through the point of view of the protagonists, he or she needs to be intelligent. The more intelligent, the more the reader can see complexity through the protagonists' eyes. You can write a story where the protagonist is not very smart, and I have read stories where this is so, but it is much easier to plot using an observant, active, interesting person than one who doesn't understand his or her world. (Crook, 1998)

As I have outlined in earlier sections of this paper, basing these heroes on MI Theory can diversify the perceptions of intelligence and provide the desired complexity from specific perspectives, namely those of individuals who are strongly gifted in one intelligence area. If learning is vital to elevating a protagonist to the status of hero, then in order to effectively portray a hero archetype for one of the multiple intelligences, the learning that occurs should be related directly to that hero's strengths in his or her intelligence area. Practically, this requires that the hero archetype for each intelligence reveal his/her growth through the development of skills and expertise in that intelligence. In order to achieve this, it was first necessary to have effective ways of evaluating the degree to which each character's talents and skills conformed to the criteria for the corresponding intelligence area.

My understanding of MI Theory has been bolstered by exposure to many diverse perspectives on its applications for assessment and curriculum development in an educational setting. One perspective that has been particularly helpful in discovering ways to infuse these hero characters with the essence of each of the intelligences is Nina Greenwald's wheel representation entitled *Multiple Intelligences and Associated Critical and Creative Thinking* (1998). In this wheel, Greenwald identifies actions that are indicative of the ways in which these intelligences are evident in the daily lives of those who demonstrate strength in them. These verbs, along with rubrics I have created for classroom assessment of MI dispositions, have provided me with tools for assessing the efficacy of my characters in conveying the essential qualities of an intelligence area.

I plan to infuse the aforementioned qualities, in part, through the mentor/hero relationship, where specific skills and training will be passed from mentor to student. The study and acquisition of magic is an integral part of this portrayal. To illustrate how the multiple intelligences will present in the growth of the hero characters, I'd like to take this opportunity to explore the ways that each of the multiple intelligences will manifest in the spectrum that will ultimately recreate Light Magic in *The Colorsong Prophecy*, and to assess these manifestations against the criteria suggested by Nina Greenwald's wheel and my own MI evaluation rubrics. Because I have written a significant portion of the first book, *Violet Verse*, which portrays the Verbal/Linguistic hero, Dirk Goran, the ways in which this intelligence exhibits in the story are significantly more developed. For the

remaining six intelligences used for hero archetypes, I simply define the characteristics I intend to instill in my hero archetypes and consider a few ideas about how they might manifest. Also, I address my reasons for omitting an Intrapersonal hero in greater detail.

The connection between Verbal/Linguistic intelligence and magic is evident in the relationship of words to power. In *Writing with Power* (1998), Peter Elbow considers the magic of words.

The magical view of language, in a nutshell, is that the word is a *part* of the thing it stands for –the word *contains* some of the juice or essence or soul of the *thing* it points to. (Elbow, 1998)

WordWeaving is the Violet aspect of Light Magic for which Dirk Goran, the Verbal/Linguistic hero, has a special gift. Dirk discovers, through his relationships with mentor figures, that the metaphorical language in his poetry allows him to call things by their true name, therefore giving him power over the thing he describes. These metaphors are based on the Norse concept of the kenning, a type of metaphor that seeks to distill the essence of an object by creating a uniquely appropriate alternate name for what it describes. For example, a ceiling- mounted, indoor, globe-shaped lighting fixture might be described in a kenning as a “chamber-sun.” WordWeaving, itself, is a kenning for poetry. This ability also allows Dirk to rearrange letters in his mind to form anagrams. While Dirk’s gift for WordWeaving is a natural talent, it is only by honing his skills through practice that he is able to control this Magic. In *Violet Verse*, readers are introduced to Dirk’s magical abilities with their first glimpse into his poetry.

Where the wood had begun to decay against the moist warmth of the quenching trough, lights twinkled and sparkled in a phosphorescent dance. Dirk had never seen anything so intriguing! He ran to the entryway to get his journal from his satchel, nearly tripping over Grayson in his haste. There was a poem in those lights. Dirk wanted to capture the image in words before they faded from the night and his thoughts. Back in his alcove, he took out a quill, opened a fresh page, leaned against the sill, and began to write.

*Starry ground and packed-black sky
Looking low, embracing higher
Thoughts when young minds wonder why
Lights skitter-dash. A wild fox-fire!*

Dirk laid his journal down on the windowsill and dreamily watched the lights fading. All of a sudden, something leaped out of the darkness and lunged through the window. Startled, Dirk stumbled back onto his bed, knocking his journal to the floor. An intense pair of amethyst eyes glared at him from the sill. It was a white fox! Faint, silvery starlight danced on the feathery fur of its swishing tail. As Dirk sat stunned in awe and admiration, the fox swooped to the floor, snatched the journal in its teeth, vaulted the sill, and dashed out into the forbidden night. (Shylit, 2002)

Both Dirk and the readers along with him later discover that it was the Violet Magic in his words that summoned the fox from the essence of the phosphorescent lights. Later in the book, Dirk uses these same talents, sharpened through study, to write the seventh verse of *The Colorsong Prophecy*, to overcome various challenges on his quest, and, ultimately, to recognize the Dragon Queen's scepter from an anagram whispered to him by Wisdom's Wind and to call it by its true name to temporarily break the hold that Shadow has claimed on the land, thereby rescuing the other dwarves from the Shadow Lord's fortress on the Dark Moon.

While it is clear enough that Dirk *uses* his Verbal/Linguistic intelligence to recreate Violet Magic, the goal of an archetype is to *exemplify* Verbal/Linguistic intelligence. Someone who is highly gifted in Verbal/Linguistic intelligence articulates proficient perception and expression of language, communicates effectively through the use of language, and shows awareness of subtle meanings in language. I believe that Dirk's experiences, challenges, and successes as a hero are wholly infused with the above abilities. Also, to accentuate the ways in which a similarly gifted Verbal/Linguistic reader may perceive the language of the book, the narrative itself is written with careful attention to rich, literary devices and figurative language.

The Logical/Analytical hero, Nuru, embarks on his quest to recreate Orange Magic in the second book of the series, *Orange Order*. Nuru is a young member of the Mototu tribe of the Fire Fields, who has a gift for numbers and calculations. Someone who is highly gifted in Logical/Analytical intelligence discerns and analyzes abstract relations in sophisticated ways, often experimenting with numerical reasoning and logical problem solving. Nuru studies these skills under the tutelage of his mentor, Bardred Egam, an elfin wizard who is one of the seven sages of the Old Way. Orange Magic is based upon alchemical ratios that are determined by complex calculations.

Trent is the hero that represents Musical intelligence in the third book of *The Colorsong Prophecy* entitled *Indigo Improvisation*. Trent is one the Causaxum, beings of living stone that resemble gargoyles. He leaves the pristine home of his people in the

Crystal Caverns to follow the song of the mermaid Jessha, which is carried to him in the echoes of an underground stream. Someone who is highly gifted in Musical intelligence interprets and appreciates the perception and generation of sound in a sophisticated way, and synthesizes complex meaning through music. Not only does Trent recognize his call to adventure in the song of his mentor, but also he learns to recreate Indigo Magic by playing his crystal flute in ways that affect change on the world around him. Indigo Magic is based on melodies that resonate to tune the moods of those who listen.

The hero of *Yellow Yearning*, Zohra, is one of the Farasa Wanderers who live in the Sunsear Sands, a desert in the central region of Prys Maren. While her people roam the deserts at night, Zohra stays up late, well into the hours after dawn, to paint the sunrises. During one of these magical mornings, she discovers a golden bracelet. When she brushes the sand off its shiny surface, a Djinn named Kaliq appears and teaches Zohra more about her artistic gifts. Someone who is highly gifted in Visual/Spatial intelligence perceives, maneuvers, and depicts visual images, and constructs elaborate meaning through visual representation or works of art. Zohra learns to create art that comes alive through her powers of Yellow Magic.

Shappa is the hero that personifies Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligence in the fifth book of *The Colorsong Prophecy* entitled *Red Rhythm*. She is a centaur who lives in the Province of Coltsfoot among the Quiligana Healers. Shappa has sincere difficulty distinguishing among the various herbs and remedies used in healing, and she is the

daughter of famous healers. Instead, she spends her time racing with the winds.

Someone who is highly gifted in Bodily/Kinesthetic intelligence activates the body to assemble products or solve problems through movement, and shows skill in coordination and motor abilities. Shappa embodies Red Magic by learning to move objects through a sort of telekinesis, which is enacted by physically portraying the object she wishes to move.

In *Green Garden*, Keynwir is a young woman of the Dealfdaonna, a race of sea fairies who shape-change into dolphins. She is the Naturalist Hero, and she learns to cultivate sea plants to create potions of healing as she discovers the secrets of Green Magic. Someone who is highly gifted in Naturalistic intelligence integrates an intricate understanding of the natural world by distinguishing among, classifying, and observing features of the environment to study concerns and originate products. Keynwir practices all of these skills while growing her magical garden.

The last book is likely to be the most challenging to write. In this seventh book, *Blue Bridges*, Li Lan quests to recover Blue Magic. She is a Tianese Sprite with a potent gift for communicating with others. While the other six spectral magics have been rediscovered by heroes from the other six Provinces, the power of Shadow is still feeding off the distrust among races. Li Lan's quest is to find the other six heroes and convince them to work together to recreate the unified power of Light Magic, which will balance Shadow again. Someone who is highly gifted in Interpersonal intelligence shows

profound sensitivity to the feelings, beliefs, moods, and intentions of other people, and collaborates effectively by interacting within and among a group. Li Lan exhibits these traits by using her understanding of the motivations of diverse individuals to foster collaboration among six other stubborn heroes who have vastly different ways of approaching problems. In this last book, all the heroes of *The Colorsong Prophecy* interacts with one another, and ultimately band together against the Shadow Lord to break the reign of Shadow and restore peace to Prys Maren.

My reasons for choosing to omit a hero archetype based on Intrapersonal intelligence are twofold. Firstly, there are ways in which such a hero archetype would be redundant. Someone who is highly gifted in Intrapersonal intelligence intuits a deep self-understanding through metacognition and reflection, and contemplates the ways in which this introspection might be beneficial in achieving understanding. Just by virtue of embarking on a personal quest, heroes of every type are on a journey of self-discovery. Here, again, I emphasize the heroic criteria of sacrifice and growth. Someone without true self-understanding can not easily demonstrate either of these qualities in powerful ways. Secondly, a character archetype based on Intrapersonal intelligence would need to overcome challenges based on self-understanding. While this could feasibly provide an interesting internal story on the challenges and intricacies of introspection with some fascinating psychological explorations, the limitations of keeping a character within the internal realms of the mental and emotional planes would prove difficult in an adventure

story. I chose, instead, to find meaningful ways to represent this intelligence area in concert with the intelligences strengths of all the heroes, allowing Intrapersonal growth to give readers a way to learn more about the characters as they learn about themselves.

In addition to creating hero archetypes for the multiple intelligences, I want the books of *The Colorsong Prophecy* to model the strength of nonviolence as a viable action in the resolution of conflict. Violent urges are present in society and in our inner selves. I believe it is important to recognize that these impulses exist by acknowledging them as potential choices for action. It is by actively choosing *not* to act in violent ways, and by redirecting these urges into nonviolent solutions to overcoming adversity, that the potency of these nonviolent choices is conveyed. It is harder to choose nonviolence. The heroes must struggle with these choices, and feel the intensity of emotion that comes with making them. In this excerpt from *Violet Verse*, Dirk comes close to succumbing to his violent urges.

Exasperated, Dirk lunged for his journal, which still lay on the ground, but the fox, awakened by the angry cries, was quicker. Sharp teeth slashed one of the patches of leather on the back cover as the fox snatched Dirk's journal from his reach. In the turmoil, the tiny, purple book tumbled from Dirk's grip and vanished under the folds of Einar's cloak. Dirk braced himself with his empty hands. Straightening up, he stood face to face with Einar. Trembling, the old dwarf clutched his staff in desperation, his already ashen knuckles whitening even more. Just one hard shove and Dirk could knock him down like a brittle branch in a storm. Rage raised Dirk's shoulder, but those clouded eyes – eyes that held no sight, but all the passion of a lightning bolt – stayed his body and stilled his wrath. Dirk swallowed the shame of his almost-actions, and salted them with fresh, soundless tears. (Shylit, 2002)

The heroes of *The Colorsong Prophecy* will continually encounter the option to engage in violent acts. They *choose* not to follow that path, and instead use their talents and skills, symbolized by their use of magic, to find alternatives that might require more ingenuity, but which are significantly more satisfying, and clearly more honorable.

While real life choices can not rely on the power of magic, the nonviolent actions of these heroes may encourage readers to seek creative nonviolent alternatives with more vigor and resolve.

Not only do these decisions depict the ways in which nonviolence can be powerful, exposure to these active choices provides the moral dilemmas necessary to challenge adolescents to hold these ideas in tension with their current level of moral reasoning. In this way, the heroes have the potential to serve as models for the stages of adolescent moral development. Dirk Goran begins the book in Kohlberg's third stage of moral development, the first stage in the Conventional level of morality, typified by moral reasoning based on seeking approval from others. He wants to be accepted by adults and peers, and this desire for acceptance drives his moral understanding. As the book progresses, Dirk is forced to make decisions that require a greater depth of moral understanding, such as choosing to follow through on a promise at the expense of his acceptance by the community. These challenges provide the opportunity for these characters, and the readers along with them, to elevate their stage of moral reasoning.

The strenuous challenges and ordeals that each hero must face on a quest are built into the mythic structure of the Hero's Journey. Christopher Vogler identifies the stages of this structure in his book, *The Writer's Journey*.

The Stages of the Hero's Journey

1. Ordinary World
 2. Call to Adventure
 3. Refusal of the Call
 4. Meeting with the Mentor
 5. Crossing the First Threshold
 6. Test, Allies, Enemies
 7. Approach to the Inmost Cave
 8. Ordeal/ Reward (Seizing the Sword)
 9. The Road Back
 10. Resurrection
 11. Return with the Elixir
- (Vogler, 1998)

This structure serves to lend both authenticity and drama to a story. Storytellers used formulae like this one to shape stories, and there are infinite possibilities for the details of each of these stages. Dirk's quest to recover Violet Magic and save his people from Shadow echoes these stages as follows:

Dirk starts his adventure in the normal world of the Lupen village (Stage 1). He receives the call to action in his encounter with Einar the Ancient (Stage 2). He makes an empty promise and returns to the village, where he finds that his sister has become a victim of the strange disappearances (Stage 3). Dirk escapes from house arrest and journeys to seek help from Zandor, the last of the Wind Dragons (Stage 4). Dirk successfully composes the next verse of The Colorsong Prophecy (Stage 5). Dirk is

chased by the minions of evil. (Stage 6) Dirk decides to bait the Shadowing and is transported through the portal to the fortress on Gondra's moon (Stage 7). Dirk confronts Kryos and acquires the Dragon Queen's scepter by recognizing and naming it (Stage 8). During the acquisition, Kryos escapes, closing the Shadow portal behind him, and trapping Dirk on the moon (Stage 9). Dirk writes a new portal open using the Feather of the Frost Falcon (Stage 10). Dirk returns home to the Lupen village with the Scepter of the Dragon Queen.

By comparing my plot ideas against mythic structure, it helped me develop a feel for the rhythm and pace of the book. It also nurtures the elements of emotional truth, as this structure evokes the culture-transcending elements of mythology. This is one theoretical principle that implies a practical method as well.

Another goal I had in writing *The Colorsong Prophecy* was to cater to an audience of both males and females. Gender plays an important role in the ways in which readers identify with hero characters. While it is possible for a reader to connect with characters of either gender, most teens seem to prefer reading stories about heroes of their own gender. Because the genre of fantasy traditionally has a greater number of male heroes, and because I feel it is especially important for teenaged girls to have access to strong female protagonists, I have chosen to tip the scales slightly in favor of female heroes for *The Colorsong Prophecy*. Of the seven heroes, four are female and three are male.

I hope, too, for these heroes to appeal to readers who approach these stories from diverse cultural backgrounds. The fantasy races, while they are not human, have strong symbolic elements that draw loosely from the mythologies of many earth cultures. The names I have chosen for the heroes and races are intended to evoke the languages and philosophies of many cultures. The Lupen Dwarves borrow elements from Norse mythology; the Tianese Sprites adopt some of their style from the Far East; the Mototu, appropriate certain cultural aspects from Sub-Saharan Africa; the Quiligana Healers embrace some basic ideologies from the peoples of Native America; the Dealdaonna have ties to Celtic mythology; the Farasa Wanderers are loosely based on the tales of Arab lands; and, the Causaxum elicit the archaic precision of Latin.

The variety of peoples in Prys Maren provides a context for addressing racism and other forms of hatred based on fear and lack of understanding. Again, I must be careful that this aspect of the story does not, in any way, resemble a lecture. Rather, I will attempt to leave the moral unstated, revealing these prejudices, instead, from the perspective of other characters' erroneous perceptions of those cultures of which they have no knowledge. The last book will be instrumental in portraying the very real differences in the ways that people misunderstand the intentions of strangers based on their unfamiliar actions and frames of reference.

As I continue to develop my stories, the theories that I have studied are becoming more and more integrated into the tapestry of my work. Sometimes I have metacognitive

awareness of the specific threads I have woven: other times they jump straight from under my mind to accent the ink on a page. In the next chapter, I explore my emerging awareness of the process and progress of *The Colorsong Prophecy*.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING THE CREATIVE LIFE:

THE FUTURE OF THE COLORSONG PROPHECY

The Colorsong Prophecy has changed my life. Not only have I committed to writing seven books when I had never before intended to become an author, but I wake up suddenly at 3 o'clock in the morning with an impromptu burst of poetry, I sketch designs of amulets on my classroom whiteboard between classes, and I frantically search for scraps of paper to record ideas before they vanish while riding on the Interstate. In this chapter, I offer a peek into my own creative process, and I discuss my future plans for completing, publishing, and promoting this work of literary art.

My Creative Process: A Rippled Reflection

Since I was quite young, I have often been called creative. Between my interest, study, and career in the performing arts, my active participation in creative problem-solving activities, such as Olympics of the Mind, and my general predisposition towards anything that evokes imagination, most of my personal acquaintances are likely to come

up with the word creative when pressed for a word to describe me. I prefer choreography to dance, composition to musical performance, and improvisation to scene study. In my mind, as I once told one of my colleagues, lug nuts are next to pizza. I tolerate ambiguity with relative ease, and I cherish living outside the proverbial box. So, in a sense, I have always lived the creative life.

This project is different. It emerged from under my consciousness, and evolved out of activities I experienced in my study of Critical and Creative Thinking. This journey began while I was taking the Creative Thinking course in the fall of 1999. I had just married, and my life was in a palpable state of constant change. This journal entry from late October, 1999 hints of the inspiration soon to emerge.

Lately, I have been hearing things. New answers to seemingly rhetorical questions. An organized rhythmic composition in the broom-induced percussion of sweeping an elementary school staircase. The actual meanings of the words that comprise the playground chants that kids mindlessly absorb and mindfully mimic. Dry leaves whispering. People orating monologues to one another in the guise of conversation. A child's quick intake of breath at the awareness of something new and fascinating. The thought-laden, self-doubting silence following the careless trampling of a fresh idea. The bending-pitched whoosh of my own life pulse in my ear.

I have also been seeing things. Leaves portraying flowers. Adolescent eye rolls. The woven art of spiders. The shiny signature of tears held captive in the eyes. The wisdom of a circle. The anybody faces of dreams. The stretched-strong hugging protection of her skin on her pregnant abdomen. Hidden spaces to store treasures. Smoke softening angles of objects. Incandescent light becoming dancing fairies when you squish up your eyelids.

Maybe it's just that I have been listening and watching. Wondering has stimulated my attention and nurtured an active, refreshed existence for my doldrum-taxed sensory processing. Sights and sounds present themselves as materials, media for my mind to craft. I find myself seeking, searching, and

drinking what I might otherwise have barely noticed. I collect ideas as a child does shells at a beach. I coax my own intent and embrace the recognition of my volition. Is this my first spicy taste of purpose?

Through this class, I am becoming more aware of how I function as a creative being. Sometimes I feel pain. Exploring creativity trips the trap wires of inner places I have previously protected. Trying to reknow the potential of the heights of my imagination, I fear I have lost some important flight information. I also fear that in a desperate thirst for self-actualization, I have doused my newly acquired information (the readings, class discussions, journal writing) in supreme subjectivity. This knowledge still serves to fuel my motivation, but I will need more time than this course allows to view it from enough of a distance to allow a more objective perspective. Anyone have a wide-angle lens?

Despite the pain and the recognition of my need for time, I have enough confidence to know that my journey has begun. I suspect that the scenery will be both beautiful and worthwhile. (excerpt from personal journal, Shylit, 1999)

Two weeks later, while on my honeymoon in Europe, the eureka moment arrived.

I am convinced that it was no accident that the muse would visit just after I first became aware of the masterful, time-transcending art of Florence, Italy. Three years later, I would adapt another journal entry, written on the way home from Europe, for the introduction to this synthesis.

After that amazing moment on the Wagon-Lit, I tried to find every possible way to merge this project with my CCT classes. Not only did these attempts reflect my excitement, but they also proved pragmatic. When you have an already overflowing schedule that includes work, graduate school, theater, family, and a new marriage, finding time to write and create can prove an immense challenge. By incorporating my writing into my studies, I was better able to justify prioritizing this work. In CCT 630, Critical and Creative Thinking in Literature and the Arts, I first explored the possibility

of trying to create characters from the multiple intelligences. My original prototype paragraphs appear in this excerpt from my work for this course.

Wolf Riders (Verbal/Linguistic Hero)

In the northern tundra regions, a young boy tears through icy brush on the back of his wolf, curling his strong, stubs of fingers through the animals coarse, smoke-colored fur and huddling into his withers against the wind. His own white, wiry hair whips his face, yet his heart pounds the warmth of anticipation through his short, thick limbs. The boy's stocky right leg scrapes the stiff lump in his riding sack with each of the wolf's strides, teasing of the gleeful challenge ahead. For tied securely in the sack, a stone tablet bearing a secret language waits to be translated and understood.

Wind Gliders (Logical/Analytical Hero)

At the same time, in the eastern skies above the towering treetops of the Rowan Grovelands, a tiny flicker of color shimmers earthward. Alighting on a mossy gnarl of the root of a Rowan tree, she searches the soil for a reed, a stick -- anything! She's got to write this problem down. Snatching a twig, she scribbles furtively, pausing only to brush a silkworm thread off her tired wing. Scribbling and pondering, she doesn't notice the second sun setting.

Fire Formers (Interpersonal Hero)

And in the Firefields skirting the central plains, the evening embers glow scarlet on the scaled skin of a lad. He rehearses his speech, trying to imagine the soon to be somber expressions of those he will leave. Ever empathetic, he, too, hurts inside. Yet, he knows the future of all people depend on his diplomacy. If only his people truly understood the depth of his knowing, and the breadth of his fiery reach.

Cave Crawlers (Musical Hero)

Deep in the southwestern crystal caves, the gentle drip of an underground brook sings echoes through the cool caverns. A boy listens intently with pale lids draped over grey eyes and languid limbs lazing in a relaxed recline, softly humming the pitch of each drop and swaying to the distant clinking rhythm of the crystal engineers at work in the Quartz Quarter. Soon a new sound vibrates from the water source, a sound so enticing and mellifluous that the crystals ring in response. The boy sits upright; he leans his ear in towards the water. Following

the trickle of the brook, he ventures into ever-tinier crevices to seek the sound's source.

Surf Skippers (Naturalist Hero)

In the cool, salty surf of the Southern Sea, a dolphin sleekly dives through the tide, swimming swiftly towards a craggy island shore. With a burst of energy, he skips easily over the sharp edge of the low, stony cliff coming to rest on a ledge drenched in the glowing colors of the sunset. His skin warms and tightens around him, and his muscles stretch and grow to fill the space of his true shape. Wiggling the wet from his forming fingers, he kneels, then rises to scan the skyline for the tallest tree but instead sees a blurry, billowing cloud. The scent of smoke taunts his keen nose, and he knows now why his green eyes have not fixed on the beauty of his special place. Angry, he rips through the brush. As he runs, tears streak into the last evaporating drops of ocean and trickle through his damp hair. How dare they!

Sun Seekers (Visual/Spatial Hero)

Wisps of blowing sand curl around her sandals as she peers into the coming desert twilight. Knowing the light won't stay but for a few more minutes, she carefully rolls the painted cloth in layers of clean gauze, and strides slowly towards camp. There will be soul-jabbing questions when she arrives, and she knows she doesn't have a good reason to have been out all day alone. But how could she have noticed it was getting so late? In her picture, the world was perfect and blue, eternally cool, and never as invasive as the pricks of wind-flung sand or the nosy questions of a dozen gabbing relations.

Earth Shapers (Bodily/Kinesthetic Hero)

She can smell the enticing spicy aroma of the evening meal wafting on the woodland wind from the riverbank, and she knows that mother will soon be worried.

"Okay, Deer," she says, startling the young doe nibbling leaves a few yards away, "I'll race you to the river."

The doe raises her head and cocks it quizzically, then, as if she understands the challenge, skittishly scrambles into a graceful gait. She feels her own body tense at the thought of the race. She focuses her inner power, striving to become as agile and swift as the deer, and she runs. She notices the tingle of exertion in her solid legs, and feels the leaf tips tagging her broad shoulders as she tears past. Soon, out of breath and exhilarated, she approaches the quiet clay homes of her people. (Shylit, 2000)

These paragraphs served as little more than a catalyst towards actualizing this series and convincing the skeptic inside me that this concept was viable. Since these were written, I have changed the characters, races, style of prose, and intelligence distributions dozens of times as I continued to experiment with different possibilities. However, after these first crude attempts at actually putting narrative to the ideas for these characters, it became clear that I wanted to pursue it further. I sustained the interest and the motivation to continue. This was something new for me. While I never before had had a deficiency of creative ideas for projects, seeing these ideas through to development and ultimately completion was a perennial challenge. After a year of germination and exploration, I felt confident that I was ready to commit to *The Colorsong Prophecy*.

I was also, at this time, cultivating an intense new interest in Philosophy. Actually, it was not new at all. Rather, it was recalled – literally! I called it by a new name. The more I read about philosophy, the more I realized that those intriguing, big picture ideas that I had once assumed to be little more than daydreams born of my exposure to fantasy stories were worthy of sincere study.

I love a good fantasy. It is wonderful to explore rich worlds and unusual characters to take focus away from the doldrums of “real” life. Now, through my study of philosophy, I recognize another more latent, yet powerful reason that literature of this sort has always held significant meaning for me. The fantasy novels that shaped the consciousness of my youth are wholly saturated with

philosophical themes! Verily, these novels were often my first real experience with philosophical ideas. As I revisit these ideas with the perspective of adulthood, I become aware of how much of my own childhood exploration of philosophical questions had stories or books as a catalyst. (Shylit, 2000)

Through the study of Philosophy, I recognized the reasons why writing literature of this sort was so important. Authors, and especially authors of children's fantasy, were no longer simply crafters of words to me. I had a new awareness of the potential impact of these works on the minds of their readers.

Summoning creativity from theory came organically in a moment of inspiration. During the Practicum course, *Processes of Research and Engagement*, I was faced with the task of designing research that would allow me to turn this creative idea back into scholarly study so that I might emerge on the other side of this critical thinking process better able to actualize this creative idea. I formulated the following question to guide my research.

In what ways might I develop skills and acquire knowledge to enable myself to create a series of fictional fantasy novels for young adults that employs the theories of Multiple Intelligences (MI) to inform the development of hero archetypes for each intelligence area, and encourages children to identify with these characters and their challenges while engaging them in an exciting, well-written adventure story that facilitates imagination? (Shylit, 2000)

This question led me down many different exploratory paths towards understanding exactly what it was I was attempting to accomplish. It was then that I first

noticed the frequent pieces of ideas about the world of Prys Maren that would leap into my consciousness at the most inopportune moments.

The original idea for the world of Prys Maren had appeared as an already-crafted frame with a vast expanse of space to fill in. Now came the puzzle pieces, of every shape, size, texture, and color, and they would fly full force at me when I most expected anything else. No one ever told me that the creative process would require such good reflexes! Sometimes the puzzle-piece ideas would bounce off my awareness, and I would have to search frantically for them as they became buried under my daily obligations. Other times I would catch them immediately and record them in whatever fashion I could muster --scribbled erratically on a used envelope, written in marker on the back of my hand, recorded on my answering machine to play later -- for they never arrived when the frame was in front of me. The best ideas always came during chaotic busy times when I had no time to develop them. When I did get the opportunity to sit down and “work” on the writing, I tried desperately to piece together this jigsaw puzzle, all the while knowing fully that some monster called creativity had mixed several boxes together, and that same monster had taken the liberty of swallowing dozens of pieces from each box. After many months of playing catch, keep (the hardest part --believe me!), and fit, the frame of Prys Maren was filled with a patchwork of color and strangely shaped empty spaces. Then the monster reappeared and began to work for me.

Thankfully, the monster called creativity was eternally hungry. I would feed her the images from my mind, and she would munch on the edges until they fit one of the holes in my puzzles. Then I'd pull a "bait and switch" and the process would begin again. During this time of generating ideas, I imagined a desert island and sent my inner-editor there for a lengthy vacation. I recalled a reading from my first semester at graduate school written by Peter Elbow from his book, *Writing With Power* (1998).

Writing calls on two skills that are so different that they usually conflict with each other: creating and criticizing. In other words, writing calls on the ability to create words and ideas out of yourself, but it also calls on the ability to criticize them in order to decide which ones to use. It is true that these opposite mental processes can go on at the same time. When they do, you find yourself writing words that are at once inventive and rich, yet also shrewd, tough-minded and well ordered. But such magical sessions are rare. Most of the time it helps to separate the creating and criticizing processes so they don't interfere with each other: first write freely and uncritically so that you can generate as many words and ideas as possible without worrying whether they are good; then turn around and adopt a critical frame of mind and thoroughly revise what you have written –taking what's good and discarding what isn't and shaping what's left into something strong. You'll discover that the two mentalities needed for these two processes –an inventive fecundity and a tough critical-mindedness – flower most when they get a chance to operate separately. (Elbow, 1998)

This was truly the first time I was able to successfully put Elbow's wise advice into practice. Prior to this project, and sometimes—I'll admit – during this project, I struggled with expecting myself to turn out written work that was fully actualized and that met my standards in the first draft. After all, I had experienced those "magical sessions" before. Why shouldn't I expect my best work from myself? It was only when I

realized that this perfectionism was, indeed, locking my monster in her cage, that I was able to understand that I needed this key. This excerpt from my process review from Evaluation of Educational Change expresses this change that emerged from my practice and study.

I am now more me.

Where once I was a person who struggled to tame my own thoughts, caging them in context and allowing only the most refined to emerge after careful scrutiny, I now rejoice in discovering both the wild beast ideas that my training could never break and the subdued ones with hidden values that failed to meet contrived ideals. This is not to say that I have abandoned judgement, for that, too, has grown stronger in its nourished development, but I have been better able to discern the times and places where that discretion best serves.

Evaluation also means seeking value in unlikely places, yet there are many times in my learning and teaching career when I have missed just that. It is easy to celebrate the elegant, for it is clear to see those ways in which art and refinement have sculpted the raw material; the artist is present in the product. However, these elegant products rarely push the limits of the possible or whisper undercurrents that few might hear. I now often find myself allowing these ideas into the light—and they look different in the open! Ragged or rugged, many more are beautiful than I might have imagined. How many of these have I missed in my lifetime? How many have wasted away in the dark? (Shylit, 2002)

One of the main catalysts, I believe in empowering my success in creating this opus is an image I remember from a workshop I attended at Project Zero in the summer of 2001. As a physical metaphor of subjectivity, focus, and point of view, the workshop leaders would occasionally hold up their thumbs and forefingers so that they would form a frame. As a child, I abhorred structure. I tenaciously rebelled against anything that would tie me down to one specific way of doing something. However, if structure is

perceived merely as the frame through which one views a potential work of art, it is far less frightening. In this way, I still had permission to poke my head through the frame and examine anything I wished that was outside it, while remaining aware of the structure as I was guided by its direction.

In retrospect, this understanding explains my earlier successes with writing poetry. When I took a poetry course as an undergraduate at Connecticut College, we explored various poetic forms, many of which required strict meters, rhyme sequences, and line requirements. The more the poem was structured, the more I complained about writing it. Also, the more a poem was structured, the more creative I needed to be to use the structure effectively to convey what I wanted to communicate. Ultimately, these were the poems that pleased me the most at completion.

The Colorsong Prophecy has layers of structures, frames within frames. There is the original frame of heroes based on multiple intelligences, there is the frame of mythic structure based on the hero's journey, and there is the frame of the work itself, seven novels, each about the personal journey of one hero and the final one bringing all of them together. *The Colorsong Prophecy* poem, itself, echoes this structure, with seven stanzas of seven lines. As I first looked at the task of writing this work, the degree of structure intimidated me. I feared I would never be able to create writing that felt fresh and creative with the burdens of all these limitations.

However, while I was writing Chapter Two of *Violet Verse*, one of my characters surprised me by pulling something out of his cloak.

“Dirk Goran. You are your mother’s son.” The old voice was gentle, now. “Heed her words, if my voice is too strange. Here.” Einar reached deep into the folds of his cloak and produced a tiny book bound in cloth dyed a deep purple. A worn, thin cord held the pages closed. Dirk stared. Einar pushed the book into Dirk’s hand. Dirk’s clumsy fingers fumbled to unwind the cord while his heart drummed a rapid rhythm in his chest. Soon, the cord dropped like a snake on the snow. The little hook jittered in Dirk’s open palm.

Before those words appeared on the page, I had no idea that Einar had Dirk’s mother’s journal in his pocket! This surprise comforted me. It reassured me to know that spontaneity still reigned within the external structures I had imposed.

As I approached the completion of my graduate coursework in Critical and Creative Thinking, and as I dedicated my remaining time to the development of this synthesis, I felt it was important to test the waters by opening my experiment to a select group from my intended audience for feedback. Though petrified, I asked a group of middle school students to read the first chapter of my book and provide feedback on what they read. I encouraged each student to identify things that they appreciated about the work and things that could be improved. The students expressed appreciation of the personality of the main character, the mystery of the disappearances, the descriptive language, and the overall quality of the story. The most common suggested improvement was to finish the book quickly so they could find out what happened next, though several students were able to pinpoint some areas of text that needed clarification. I revised my

work in response to their suggestions, and I now have weekly queries into how much more I have completed. These are good motivations to keep writing!

In addition to the young adults that read my work, I had the honor of working with Susan Butler, a published author of young adult fantasy fiction best known for her award-winning book *The Hermit Thrush Sings*. She, too, is completing her degree at UMASS Boston, and her comments, encouragement, and experience in publishing have been invaluable resources in this process. The connections with and feedback from other graduate students along the way have been a vital part of this graduate school experience.

And the ripples keep coming. Sometimes creative energy comes in gentle waves, cresting and falling, yet powering the process. Other times my monster spits bits of chewed puzzle into the flow, clouding any possibility of clear reflection. Either way, the image of my process is distorted by the undulation. As my graduate work draws to a close, I continue to assess and reassess my process, pondering the rippled pond from new angles and distances.

Future Plans

So, where do I go from here?

While this synthesis represents my work for my Master's program in Critical and Creative Thinking with a concentration in Literature and the Arts, it is not really a true

culmination, but rather a beginning. As of the publication of this synthesis, I have six and a half novels still to write in order to realize *The Colorsong Prophecy* as a synthesized whole. An author's road to a first commercially published work is an adventure in itself. Oddly, I feel a gentle confidence in my ability to follow this work through to completion. I have plans to follow both my mind and my heart in pursuing this dream.

My mind tells me to make the time to send out query letters to publishers, network with other young adult fantasy authors, solicit more young readers to provide feedback, and to continue studying the craft of writing fiction through independent research and practice. It also tells me to not get discouraged in the face of setbacks, which are imminent, and to persevere. My mind reminds me, based on history and experience, that writing blocks are temporary, and that I am able to write good fiction. Above all, it deals out ideas like a crafty card player, and I am ready for the next hand.

My heart tells me that this work has value. This is worth the investment of time, energy, and self. It tells me that I love to write, that I love to create art in many forms, and that I am, in truth, an artist and an author. My heart guides my expression, and it fans the glowing embers of my motivation. It tells me that others might benefit from my work and that perhaps there are individuals for whom these books may be just the right support. My heart ensures that this work is a compassionate reflection of my own beliefs. I do trust its rhythm.

At this juncture, I will set my feet to the path. I look forward to the ways in which my work will continue to surprise me, and grow in response to criticism. I look forward to successes and obstacles alike, as both are necessary for my development as an author. Like the heroes in my books, I must strive to maximize my talents and hone my skills. I have faith that my process will be my guide.

So, if you are reading these words at a moment in the not so distant future, perhaps you might check the bookshelves of your local bookstore or library. If there you find *The Colorsong Prophecy*, I invite you to experience the world of Prys Maren for yourself. I look forward to meeting you within those pages.

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APPENDIX A

AN EXCERPT FROM *VIOLET VERSE*,

BOOK ONE OF *THE COLORSONG PROPHECY*

Violet Verse

Chapter One

Outside the work-shed window, the last cloud of the evening hovered in a purplish wisp against the darkening sky. Both moons were new, but here and there, stars dangled like icicles from the frozen heavens. This was just the sort of magical moment that Dirk cherished. With his leather-bound journal resting open on his lap, Dirk's short, thick fingers led his plume point in a jaunty dance. Word after word, he harnessed the images of the coming night in the fervent scrawls of a young poet's passion.

"Dirk! Are you in there?"

The sharp voice pierced the young dwarf's awareness. Still clutching the quill, he flipped his journal onto the wooden floor with a dull slap, collected his sluggish limbs, and reluctantly rose. Smoke, who had been asleep at his feet, huffed a disgruntled protest.

"Dirk Goran! I hear you moving around in there! Father is furious with you. He said that if you don't come to the Gathering tonight he'll..."

Dirk unlatched the rustic pine plank door and opened it to the icy rawness of the tundra twilight. Leaning his head on the doorframe, Dirk regarded the sturdy silhouette of his sister against the starlit snow. Kelda's wiry, white hair quivered as she scolded. Her woodpecker words were fast and furious, meanings shattered in the relentless rapping.

"Dirk! What world are you in? Did you even hear a word I said?"

Kelda was two years older than Dirk, but she stood nearly a head shorter. Dirk considered her indignant expression as his eyes adjusted to the violet night. She rolled her iron-grey eyes in exasperation and began again.

"The Lupen Elders have called another urgent Pack Gathering tonight at the rise of the Wolf Star. *Everyone* is supposed to attend." Kelda paused. Dirk stared. She persisted, "And just to be perfectly clear, Little Brother, the word *everyone* includes hibernating dreamers."

Kelda waited with an air of sibling self-importance. Hands gripping her hips, her breath clouded the evening air in short, aggravated puffs as she waited for his response. Inside the shed, Smoke snorted his opinion as he nosed his way toward the open door. Kelda's own wolf mount, Onyx, bided in a pose reminiscent of the ancient wolf sculptures on the community Common. Dirk shifted his weight. He curled his fingers in Smoke's coarse hide, and mumbled his reply in a voice newly deep.

"I'll go."

“I’ll believe that when I see you there,” Kelda said.

Kelda tossed her tresses in emphatic punctuation. With a deft gesture, she summoned Onyx to her side and climbed astride the wolf’s withers. From her lofty seat, she peered down at Dirk. Then, her eyes softened into two pools of quicksilver.

“Father is at the den now if you want to have some dinner before riding down to the gathering. Or do you feed yourself solely on dreams?” A relic of affection was hurried in Kelda’s tone. “I’ll save you a seat at the common,” she said.

“Why? Aren’t you eating?” asked Dirk.

“Orm Lappish is back.” Kelda spoke the words slowly as if they tasted sweet. “He’ll be speaking tonight at the Gathering.”

“Oh.” Dirk studied the frosted pebbles on the threshold.

“I’d better get going. They are expecting me at his den.” Kelda turned Onyx toward the path. She called back over her shoulder. “Don’t be late again, Dirk. The Elders are all edgy about the disappearances.” Kelda and Onyx bounded off, a synchronized smudge of motion on the still snowscape.

Dirk watched them go. Smoke, who had bolted to attention at the mention of dinner, began to tug eagerly at the trim of Dirk’s tunic.

“Smoke! Easy! Give me a minute to get my stuff together.”

Dirk gathered a bundle of his strewn belongings into a suede satchel and began to tidy up the shop bench. Leatherworking tools and a few unfinished pouches lay amidst

scattered scraps of tawny hide. The floor surrounding the bench was amply flecked with bits of boot lacing, and a sash hid the hole in the floorboard created by a clumsily dropped awl from Dirk's first day of apprenticeship. Old Arick was constantly complaining about Dirk's careless approach to cleaning –among other things. In truth, it simply reflected his resentment at wasting precious details on something besides his writing. Becoming a leatherworker's apprentice had not been Dirk's idea. He found the work tedious, and Old Arick himself was as contentious as a swatted hornet. Still, Dirk was quite proud of his own journal, crafted lovingly in his spare moments from leftovers. He knelt to retrieve his treasure from the floorboard and ran a finger down the ridged seam. Whimpering, Smoke paced the doorway like a sentry.

“Fine. You win. I'll finish up in the morning,” Dirk conceded. He tucked his journal in the side pocket of the satchel, and started for the door. Smoke was already crouching low in frantic anticipation. Dirk slid his leg over Smoke's back, and laughed.

“Folks would think you were starving,” he said. Dirk leaned over, secured the satchel to his belt, and whispered in the wolf's twitching ear. “I know better.”

Dirk closed the shed door behind them, and they clambered over the threshold onto the rough terrain. The Wolf Star was still hidden in the haze of the horizon, but they had to hurry if they were planning to make it back to the den for dinner before the Gathering.

This Gathering was to be the third one in as many weeks. Pack Gatherings were usually reserved for special community occasions – Coming of Age ceremonies, the Festival of the Lunar Conjunction, the initiation of a new Elder – or, they were called when there was an important decision to be made that affected the entire Pack. These last few Gatherings were different. The usual atmosphere of convivial chatter had been transformed into troubled discourse and tacit fear. Even the Lupen Elders, in their depth of wisdom, did not have answers to the ceaseless streams of horrifying questions. In the past month, three members of the Pack had disappeared – vanished, seemingly, without even a hint as to how or why. These last few Gatherings were quite different.

Soon, the icy crags and low brush of the wild lands became a paw-packed lane. Dirk and Smoke trotted through the clearing at the northern fringe of the Lupen village. Everything about this community had an air of intimacy. The low family compounds clustered around cozy courtyards, and from the center of each den the homey aromas of the evening meals curled skyward on billows of smoke and scented the crisp breeze. On most evenings, there would be an occasional clatter of spoon on kettle, and rising strains of rousing conversation would mingle with the patter of paws and the delighted squeals of the youngest dwarves at play. Tonight, although firelight danced from each open window creating flickering yellow-orange patterns on the wintry ground, a heavy hush hung over the village. Dirk rode in relative silence, save the loping rhythm of Smoke's gait. Before long, they crossed the entrance to the Common at the center of the village.

Already, a few Elders were gathered at the Stone Septe, but the seats, low benches arranged in even concentric circles around the Septe, remained empty. Just past the circular gate, the dwarf and wolf veered southeast onto a wooded passage. Two short, winding paths and several strides later, Dirk dismounted at the open front door of his father's den.

Light from the center fire of the home illuminated the hand-wrought scrolls of iron decorating the doorway, and Dirk could make out the rugged form of his father's mount, Grayson, asleep in his corner of the anteroom. There was already a warm helping of meat piled liberally on Smoke's dish, and the hungry wolf did not waste even a second in noticing his bounty. While Smoke feasted, Dirk hooked his satchel among the caps and cloaks, and strode through the archway towards the common room.

Tyr Goran sat alone at the table sipping a mug of broth. He startled at the noise from the entryway and half-rose, ready for whatever might appear, but settled again when his tired eyes met his only son's gaze. He dabbed at his closely cropped, white beard with his napkin, and gestured towards the wooden bench across the table with a broad, leathery palm.

"I guess I don't have to eat alone after all."

"I guess not," Dirk replied.

Dirk took his seat across the table as Tyr limped to the kettle and filled Dirk's bowl with a steaming stew of savory herbs and fresh game. He placed the bowl on the

table in front of Dirk. The boy wordlessly picked up the spoon and began eating. His eyes, clouded with thoughts, relaxed into the faraway focus that was Dirk's signature expression.

"Guess who stopped by today." Tyr angled for his son's attention. "Dirk?"

"Huh?"

"Guess who stopped by this afternoon." Tyr sat on the bench.

"I don't know." Dirk hated guessing games. "Orm Lappish?" In Dirk's mouth, the words were distasteful. He washed them down with a spoonful of stew.

"No, but he is back from Crystal Ridge. He'll be presenting at the Gathering."

"I know."

"News travels fast." Tyr took a swallow of broth. "Actually, I was talking about Arick. He came by this afternoon to pick up his order. We chatted for nearly an hour."

"Oh." Dirk tried to sink one of the dumplings with the back of his spoon. It floated back up again.

"Dirk." Tyr's voice was taut with affected patience. "You really need to apply yourself more at the shop. Arick has just about had it with your attitude. It's one thing to shirk your responsibilities here at the house, but it's quite another when the community is counting on you to..."

"I know!" It came out louder than Dirk had intended.

Tyr rose. He hobbled to the arched window, turned back to face the room, and settled against the low stone sill. The night, decidedly darker now, framed the older dwarf's face like the hood of a cloak.

"Dirk," he said, calmly, "I am not trying to make your life miserable. I just don't understand why you are so... Oh, I don't know." Tyr rubbed his brow with the back of his hand. "Maybe this isn't the right time to discuss this."

Dirk finished his stew in silence. How could he tell his father that he loathed leatherwork? Tyr had risked his reputation in securing this apprenticeship for him by calling on a favor from one of his oldest friends. Tyr and Arick had entered the Guild of Lupen Crafters together years ago; the youngest dwarves ever to receive master craftsman status in the community. Arick's leatherwork was considered the finest in the village, and Tyr's metalwork graced the gates to the Common itself. Mutual respect and admiration nurtured a friendship between the two that had become legendary. When Arick's wooden fence was destroyed in a blizzard, Tyr worked day and night to forge a new gate. When Tyr's wife fell ill, Arick rode south for many days through rugged steppes, arid desert, and vast plains to fetch the Healer of the Red Hills. It was Arick, too, who stood beside his father at his mother's graveside. Dirk could just remember Arick's callused hand grasping his father's broad one, both wet from wiping tears.

Dirk missed his mother. She, like him, was reserved and brooding, but her eyes sparkled with the wisdom of words unspoken. Her quiet assurance seemed to equally

puzzle and perturb the others in the Pack, yet Tyr Goran would choose no other for his mate. Dirk was not much more than a toddler when she died. Yet, he alone preserved the memory of his mother's warm embrace, her whispers of encouragement, and the loving patience in her violet eyes. Dirk's poems pulsed with her influence.

"Dirk!" Tyr's voice echoed from the entryway.

Dirk snapped back to consciousness. Smoke trotted into the kitchen area expectantly. Dirk glimpsed his father, scowling and already mounted, through the aperture of the doorway. To the east, he could see the bluish glow of the Wolf Star floating just above the tree line. They were going to be late.

When father and son arrived at the Gathering, most of the wolves were already stationed around the circumference of the Common, but the clamorous sounds of dwarven voices told them that the meeting had not yet begun. Tyr and Dirk dismounted. Grayson immediately found his station among the other wolves and sat with his nose pointed at the horizon. Smoke, ever distracted, skittered along at Dirk's heel toward the nearest entrance. A stern look from Tyr sent the wolf scrambling back to find his post, and after several nudging attempts, Smoke wriggled his way into the circle of guards, looking less than stately.

Dirk had never seen the Common this crowded. Hundreds of dwarves sat planted in arced rows, a waving field of bobbing heads and fluttering limbs. Despite the late hour, babies fussed in their mothers' arms and young ones fidgeted between the seats.

One sweeping arm from a bench nearest the Septe caught Dirk's eye with its familiar, purposeful gesture. Tyr also noticed Kelda's beckoning, and the two dwarves trudged through the crowd towards the bench where she sat with Orm Lappish.

Dirk helped his father descend the steep stairs. Enveloped in the throng, Dirk witnessed flashes of worried expressions—a furrowed brow, anxious eyes, lips pressed into a line. Dirk wasn't sure if it was the palpable anxiety of the community or just being surrounded by so many dwarves, but each individual curl on his body prickled. Tyr seemed no less disquieted. The older dwarf was not yet accustomed to the slower pace that his recent injury had compelled. Tensing his jaw, Dirk steadied himself as he guided his father through the masses. During what seemed like an eternity, they labored their way to Kelda's side. Orm rose as they approached the bench.

“Tyr Goran! It's wonderful to see you looking so well.” Orm's voice was as slick as lamp oil. He extended a finely sleeved arm in greeting.

“Welcome home, Orm. My daughter tells me you've had quite a journey,” said Tyr. “You remember my son Dirk...”

Dirk felt an adamant nudge from his father's elbow. He stepped forward. “Ah, yesss...” Orm's golden-brown eyes appraised Dirk's manner. Another nudge tagged Dirk's ribs.

“Good evening,” Dirk mustered.

“Evening? Yesss.... Sadly, I’m uncertain of the good in it,” Orm said, suppressing a sneer. One of the Elders signaled to Orm from the center of the Common. Orm turned back to Tyr and said, “If you’ll excuse me, Sir, my presence is required at the Septe.” Orm offered Tyr his seat, kissed Kelda’s hand, and swaggered off to meet the Elders.

Dirk slunk onto the bench beside his sister just as the First Elder’s wolf howled an invocation. Instantly, dwarven voices hushed in reverence. One by one, each of the other six wolves joined. As ripples of resonance reached the gate, the wolf mounts of the outer circle responded with hundreds of howls as one. Natural harmonies emerged as the music spread through the moonless night. Saturated in awesome ululation, the Common itself swelled with the sound and spirit of ages past. Hours or minutes later, the hymn of the wolves gently waned into silence. The oldest of the Lupen Elders stood in the center of the Stone Septe, seven ancient obelisks carved in the likeness of baying wolves arranged in a ring at the center of the Common. The First Elder slowly rotated as she addressed the assembled dwarves. Her voice was graveled with age.

“It has been said that tragedy brings a community together.” The First Elder paused to meet the eyes of each of the other six Elders in turn. “Tonight, we come together as one. On this, the darkest of nights, the Wolf Star shines brighter than ever before. So must we all shine in the face of adversity. Last evening, another citizen of our village vanished while riding through a wooded path...”

Stifled gasps stippled the First Elder's words. Heads bowed. Eyes averted. Shoulders shuddered. The First Elder continued resolutely.

“Around dusk, the mount of Aud, daughter of Vorda Torn, hastened home without a rider. The wolf was trembling in terror, but was able to bring Vorda to the spot where Aud had disappeared. As with the other incidents, there seemed to be nothing unusual about the scene. There was no evidence of struggle, no footprints other than those belonging to Aud's mount, and nothing was left behind to suggest even the most remote of clues. In all of our recorded history, there have never been accounts similar to these recent tragic events.”

The First Elder's voice faltered on these last words. She, who had always seemed so confident –so wise, appeared frail this evening. Even the Wolf Star itself, the sacred subject of songs and prayers, seemed to struggle in an effort to shine through the thick doubt. The Fifth Elder, a male with a long, braided beard, stepped forward to offer support. After steadying herself, the First Elder spoke again.

“After our last Gathering, our League of Lupen Elders met and agreed that we would seek counsel from other provinces in Prys Maren. Six courageous ambassadors were dispatched to the far reaches of our land in hopes that other peoples might hold some answers to our dreadful mysteries. Tonight, the first of these ambassadors has returned. Orm, son of Lang Lappish, has journeyed east over the Flavus River to the caverns of

Crystal Ridge. He brings word from the cave dwellers that live in the colonies overlooking the Calefax Cove. In the Great Wolf's name, he speaks for us all. Orm?"

The Fifth Elder guided the First Elder back to her seat at the base of the tallest obelisk, and Orm Lappish strode to the center of the Septe. He spoke with the guile of a merchant and the fervor of a convert. Kelda leaned forward in her seat to savor each word. Dirk did his best not to gag.

"My friends!" Orm began. "The situation is more grim than we ever could imagine. I, personally, have journeyed deep into the heart of the mountains. I have spoken to the leader of the Cave Dwellers himself, but to no avail. Goylen spoke harshly to me, without expression. 'It is simply not logical for a dwarf to disappear.' Not only do these blind, insipid, bat-winged freaks claim they don't know anything about the disappearances, but they refused to believe they even happened. They, our closest neighbors and tenuous allies in history, dismissed my story entirely! When I asked for their help, they flatly refused it on the grounds that my story was impossible. With due respect to our ancestors, who chose alliances with great care, I am afraid that this recent encounter arouses my suspicion. I only hope that the other ambassadors fare better in their search for aid."

Murmurs of indignation and confusion purred through the Common. Orm Lappish bowed his head in feigned humility and approached the Elders who appeared to be in intense conference. The grumbles grew louder as dwarves, growing restless in their

seats, craned their necks to glimpse the goings-on on the Septe. After a long moment, the Fourth Elder, a portly, red-faced dwarf stepped forward, his arms raised.

“Dwarves of the Great Wolf!” the Fourth Elder’s voice boomed above the noise of the crowd, who quieted in response. “There is little more we can do now but wait for the other ambassadors to return. The League of Lupen Elders, in recognition of the gravity of our situation, has decided to call for a village-wide curfew. So far, the disappearances have all occurred after sunset. Until further notice, all dwarves are to return to their family dens by sundown each day. We also recommend that all dwarves travel in pairs when they leave the boundaries of the village for any reason. We recognize these measures are drastic, but we have had enough of tragedy.” The Fourth Elder looked back at the First Elder who nodded. “May the Great Wolf guide you safely home.”

At these familiar words, the Elders’ wolves began to intone a chant of closure, but the sound was swallowed by an eruption of public frenzy. Mothers clutched their children close as they dashed for their mounts and the safety of their dens. Some dwarves mobbed the Septe in hopes of getting more information. The Common became a swirling eddy of panicked motion.

Dirk sat on the stone bench with his head in his hands and waited for the din to subside. The noise was thick in his ears as he struggled to synthesize his thoughts. A curfew at sundown? That would bring an end to his only solace; he could no longer

escape to the work-shed to write and think in solitude. Without his poetry, *he* may as well disappear into the night! Dirk knew that there was no arguing with the Elders' proclamation. The reality was that the disappearances terrified him as much as they did anyone. But to lose his only connection with the truest calling he had known? The thought sorrowed his soul.

"Dirk? Kelda? Are you ready?" Tyr Goran's eyes were tired and sad.

"Father, I am going to wait for Orm. He said he wanted to take me home *personally* to make sure I arrived safely," said Kelda. Orm was still talking to the red-faced Elder on the Septe.

"It's not safe to ride with us, then?" Dirk scoffed. "Orm is so much better equipped to handle invisible threats?"

"At least he knows how to take his job seriously!" Kelda retorted.

"Job? You call that..." Dirk started.

"Dirk, please!" Tyr's voice was a dull blade. He sighed, exasperated. "Kelda, we will see you at home later. Be careful, and don't be too long."

The short journey home was mostly uneventful. Smoke ambled along obliviously while Grayson carefully kept track of every sight and scent. The wooded path was eerie in the absence of moonlight. With two moons to cast glow, most nights were bathed in beams of silver. Once or twice a year, however, both moons hid in the same shadow. On these nights, darkness enveloped the land like a cocoon. Dirk felt its weight as he rode

towards the den, and he longed to somehow break free in a burst of color. Was there anyone out there who understood?

Tyr and Dirk, after watering the wolves, each went directly to their alcoves when they arrived home. Following Lupen tradition, there were no doors inside the den. Through the smoldering embers of the center fire, Dirk could see Tyr preparing for bed. Though it was quite late and he was quite exhausted, Dirk knew he could not sleep. He opened the wooden shutters to his window and peered out at the star-speckled blackness. Dirk felt small. How was it possible to feel so alone in the world and yet ache for privacy and space of his own? Abruptly, a flash of light caught Dirk's eye. When he turned his head to face the unusual glow, it vanished as quickly as it had appeared. Just as Dirk was convinced he had imagined it, another shimmering light flickered along the ground. It was coming from the pile of firewood by his father's forge. Where the wood had begun to decay against the moist warmth of the quenching trough, lights twinkled and sparkled in a phosphorescent dance. Dirk had never seen anything so intriguing! He ran to the entryway to get his journal from his satchel, nearly tripping over Grayson in his haste. There was a poem in those lights. Dirk wanted to capture the image in words before they faded from the night and his thoughts. Back in his alcove, he took out a quill, opened a fresh page, leaned against the sill, and began to write.

Starry ground and packed-black sky

Looking low, embracing higher
Thoughts when young minds wonder why
Lights skitter-dash. A wild fox-fire!

Dirk laid his journal down on the windowsill and dreamily watched the lights fading. All of a sudden, something leaped out of the darkness and lunged through the window. Startled, Dirk stumbled back onto his bed, knocking his journal to the floor. An intense pair of amethyst eyes glared at him from the sill. It was a white fox! Faint, silvery starlight danced on the feathery fur of its swishing tail. As Dirk sat stunned in awe and admiration, the fox swooped to the floor, snatched the journal in its teeth, vaulted the sill, and dashed out into the forbidden night.

Chapter Two

For a moment, Dirk gawked in profound disbelief. Then a fury welled inside him. The pages of that journal held his most private, precious thoughts. No one had the right to take these from him! Before Dirk himself fully comprehended what he was doing, he crept over the windowsill in a frenzy. His feet hit the rigid earth with a muted thump, and his stocky legs tramped toward where the fox had disappeared.

Step by determined step, Dirk thudded past the forge, through a corner of his neighbor's yard, into the evergreen forest at the boundaries of the village. Boughs of pine and hemlock stretched across the narrow trail above him until the stars made only occasional appearances. In the absence of sufficient light, Dirk paused. He strained against the darkness to seek any hint of silver-white fur, but there was nothing. In his stillness, he noticed the chill.

What was he doing? If his father knew he was out here after curfew, he'd be in trouble for certain. He peered back through the tunnel of tree limbs at his open window. He could still make out the dim glow of the center fire, and he wondered if his father was still awake. Dirk shuddered with cold and anger. He felt violated. Alone and utterly confused, he stumbled around in slow circles. Should he go back? Could he?

Before he could give it another thought, he glimpsed the eyes – amethyst and flickering – just ahead on the path. As the fox bounded toward him, the form of Dirk's journal eclipsed the glowing eyes with every leap. The fox skidded to a stop just a few

paces away from Dirk, delicately placed the journal on the ground, and sat smugly, curling his tail around his nimble paws. The amethyst eyes blinked a taunt.

Dirk lunged for the bait, but the fox, quick and agile, darted off again with the journal in its teeth. Dirk fell—hard! Spitting out a bit of broken pinecone, he heaved his head off the ground at the edge of a murky tarn. The dark water, now frozen, mirrored his scowling countenance. Dirk startled at his own reflection. This face looked more like a warrior than the shy, boyish self he once knew. Pine needles clung to his sparse, wiry beginnings of a beard, and a scrape decorated his cheek. His features were rugged and pale, and though his eyes were the same shade of violet as his mother's had been, these eyes brimmed with anger. Thick limbs still sprawled, Dirk craned his short neck to track the thief. Dirk seethed as he registered the fox dancing along a fallen tree, irreverently tossing his poems and memories. How he wished Smoke were here! Dirk winced to his feet with slow determination, never taking his eyes off the wily critter. The fox countered Dirk's steely stare with a defiant tail swish, and the two were off again, prancing and thudding through the undergrowth.

Dirk's breathing, heavy with effort, clouded the air around him as he lurched forward in pursuit. His sides ached and his feet felt like mallets as they pounded the packed ground. Every time he thought he could not go a step further, the fox would stop just ahead of him, teasing and beckoning until Dirk's ire fueled his own motion again.

Intent on recovering what was rightfully his, Dirk had barely noticed the subtle, yet

frequent, changes in his surroundings. He chased the fox from trail to trail until there were no trails left to follow. The sound of rushing water alerted Dirk to the presence of a woodland brook stretching across his path. In one buoyant leap from a nearby stump, the fox spanned the stream and landed cleanly on the far bank. Dirk reined in his momentum, staggered forward a few more paces, and collapsed against the stump in utter exhaustion. For a while, he sat and huffed deep, cold, stinging breaths, but the pounding of his pulse in his ears soon subsided. It was then that he noticed the birches.

Dirk had never been to this part of the forest before. Just beyond the far bank, winter-bare birch trees stretched skyward like hundreds of slender, white hands pointing to the stars. The sheen of frost on the white bark created a mystical gleam, which softened the angles of the trees making them appear even more graceful. With no leaves to obfuscate the light, the star-studded midnight sky presided over this part of the forest with a glimmering majesty. Dirk was so mesmerized by this sight that he nearly forgot the fox, but his longing to put words to these images soon reminded him. He scanned low along the frosted tree roots for the animal, and soon spotted him trotting towards... a campfire?

Sure enough, the fox's blurred silhouette was framed against a fiery radiance. Off to the south of the stand of birch trees, a tiny clearing boasted a snug encampment. Another blurry figure tottered around the fire, and Dirk could just hear the low mutterings of a male voice over the sound of the brook. Dirk's anger melted into curiosity. He

sloshed his way across the brook via some partially submerged stones and, despite the burn in his tired muscles, he wound through the birches towards the clearing.

As Dirk drew closer, the shadow at the campfire sharpened into the stooped posture of the oldest dwarf that Dirk had ever seen. The aged dwarf's beard drooped off his prominent cheekbones like willow branches after a deep snow. A cowl draped over his haggard head and shoulders, and his russet cloak dragged behind him imprinting graceful contours in the fire-softened drifts. Dirk watched the wobbling, old dwarf inch down his walking stick to settle on a fallen birch log. Instantly, the fox cozied into his master's meager lap, dropping Dirk's journal at the old dwarf's boots.

Dirk stepped forward. The old dwarf did not turn his head. A broken twig from the birch branch above tumbled into the fire, and the flames stretched upwards to catch the new kindling. The dwarf spoke to the fire, loud enough for Dirk to overhear.

"Skitter-dash, will you? What do you seek? Your flames can not claim the darkness. No, my fiery friend. This lurking dreamer must first name it for you."

Dirk's jaw slacked in amazement. Skitter-dash? Those were his words! The ink had barely dried when the fox appeared. Dirk could see his journal at the old dwarf's feet, still closed. Could he have read it? The crouching figure spoke again, but to whom? Dirk could not discern.

"He wonders, doesn't he? Ah, he should. Give him time to gather his courage. A few moments, maybe. Longer than that and he may turn from his calling altogether.

Doubt can only feed the darkness, eh?" The fox tossed his head as if to agree. The old dwarf rubbed his bony hand through the fox's silver fur. Dirk could stand it no longer. He strode the last few paces to the encampment.

"I am Dirk Goran, son of Tyr," Dirk said, trying to sound polite, yet firm.

"Yes, you are," the old dwarf replied, "but that doesn't tell the whole story, does it?" The dwarf stared straight into the fire. His deep-set eyes were overcast with filmy white. Dirk stepped closer. The long willow-branch beard swayed with the dwarf's toothless smile. Still, he did not turn his head. Dirk's mind jolted with recognition.

"Why, you're...you're..." Dirk stammered.

"Unseeing? Unseen?" the old dwarf asked. "Both and neither." The fox twisted around in the old dwarf's lap to face Dirk, and the dwarf responded to the movement with more gentle caresses. "Should I tell him my name? Or will that be his first challenge?"

Dirk knew his name. Now it was unmistakable. Since he was young, he had heard the stories of Einar the Ancient, but he had supposed them to be allegory –tales to stress the importance of community and to promote a healthy fear of strangers. Long ago, Einar had apprenticed to become a Lupen Elder. While riding home from his seven-year ambassadorship to the province of Coltsfoot in the Red Hills, he was rumored to

the truth of his own heart. According to the stories, the wildlander gave him an amulet and told Einar to travel deep into the Birch Forest and sit beneath the oldest of the birch trees at sunset on the longest day of the year. Einar traveled home to the Lupen village to begin his Elder's training, but he began to question his reasons for becoming an Elder. Weeks later, on the longest day of the year, he stole out to the Birch Forest. The sun had not yet set, but the sky grew dark with the portent of a storm. Here, again, the stories varied, but they all ended the same way: the Old Birch was hit by lightning on that evening long ago, and Einar lost his eyesight, and, some say, his sanity. He never returned to the village, though travelers stopping in the village tavern sometimes still marveled aloud at the old hermit's continuance. Einar the Ancient hovered on the outskirts of civilization and reason.

"Oh, yes. He knows more than he thinks he does. But does he have the courage to meet his future?" Einar reached beside him to grasp the handle of a small jug. He brought it to his lips and took a noisy swallow. Beads of liquid dribbled down his beard, and a single drop splashed on the corner of Dirk's journal.

"Um, excuse me, Sir. I don't mean to be..."

"Aha!" Einar whipped his head around towards the sound of Dirk's voice. "You can't fear the truth, my boy. Call things as they are. Who am I, now? Not 'Sir,' most certainly. Speak up!"

Dirk flinched at the sudden outcry, but responded with weary assurance. “You are Einar, and...” Dirk shrugged his husky shoulder and wiped his smarting palm on his tunic. “And you have something that belongs to me.”

“Do I?” Einar fingered the fringe of his beard. “Oh, you must mean this patchwork of leather and memories. A treasure? True. It lies upon the ‘starry ground’ for a reason,” said Einar.

“How do you know my poem?” Dirk implored, bewildered.

“The wilder of the winds carried the words here. Do you not know the magic in your words?” Einar set the jug down. The fox closed its amethyst eyes.

Dirk could feel the faintest sigh of a breeze at his back. The wolf star was already making its descent, and he had an uneasy feeling in his gut. He had to get back home, and soon. Could he even find his way?

“Look, um... Einar. I don’t have time for crazy talk about magic. May I have my journal? There is a curfew and I need to get—”

“Scorn? A thorn! The next chapter must be written, and soon. The Colorsong Prophecy must not end. Who hut you can do this? Do not deride that which you do not understand.” Einar’s voice rumbled like a thunderclap. His quaking hand tightened around his walking stick and he labored to his feet, displacing the fox. With an explosion of urgency, Einar reeled at Dirk, stopping just short of colliding with him. He spat his

words in Dirk's face. "Either you are willing to accept the unacceptable, or Prys Maren is ripe for permanent night."

Dirk could not reply. The old dwarf's lunacy was as clear as the sky, but there was something about what Einar said that gnawed at the deepest part of Dirk's being. The breeze rustled some dead leaves along the tree roots, and the fire responded with a clack and a spark. The two dwarves stood frozen for a long moment. Then, a bony hand came to rest on Dirk's shoulder.

"Dirk Goran. You are your mother's son." The old voice was gentle, now. "Heed her words, if my voice is too strange. Here." Einar reached deep into the folds of his cloak and produced a tiny book bound in cloth dyed a deep purple. A worn, thin cord held the pages closed. Dirk stared. Einar pushed the book into Dirk's hand. Dirk's clumsy fingers fumbled to unwind the cord while his heart drummed a rapid rhythm in his chest. Soon, the cord dropped like a snake on the snow. The little book jittered in Dirk's open palm.

Einar hobbled back to his seat by the fire, the fox darted between cloak and cane, and Dirk gawked at the shaking book in his hand. Could it be? He curled his fingers, stiff from cold, around the book and opened the cover. There, written in tiny, even print, were scores of poems –a lifetime of verses and memories! Dirk turned page after page, too stunned to even comprehend the words before him. Just past halfway through the little book, the poems stopped. The rest of the pages were blank. Dirk flipped back to

the last poem. The words on this page were larger and more erratic, as if they had been written by an unsteady hand. Shivering and forcing his focus, Dirk read.

*Shadows hover ever silent, yet --
The minds of mortals slacken unaware,
And though the aging sages might abet,
My talent has become my charge to bear.
For who in grand Prys Maren could foresee
The master plan of evil long ago?
That glorious and frightful destiny
Bequeathed alone to those who dare to know.
While now my spirit yearns to seek the chance
To banish evil from these gentle lands,
My body nears the ending of its dance
And destiny I trust to other hands.*

*Alas! I will not live to see the year
When words will conquer ignorance and fear.*

Dirk's face grew hot and cold at once as a tide of tears surged down his cheeks.

He closed the little book and gripped it to his chest. As he approached the campfire again, Dirk's teeth clattered with cold and anger making it difficult for him to speak.

"How d-did you g-get this?" Dirk demanded.

"That doesn't matter, now," Einar said, rising. "You must..."

“No!” Dirk yelled, “It does matter! How could you have kept this from me –from my family? Who do you think you are?”

“Who I am is inconsequential!” the old dwarf bellowed back. “Who do you think *you* are?”

Exasperated, Dirk lunged for his journal, which still lay on the ground, but the fox, awakened by the angry cries, was quicker. Sharp teeth slashed one of the patches of leather on the back cover as the fox snatched it from Dirk’s reach. In the turmoil, the tiny, purple book tumbled from Dirk’s grip and vanished under the folds of Einar’s cloak. Dirk braced himself with his empty hands. Straightening up, he stood face to face with Einar. Trembling, the old dwarf clutched his staff in desperation, his already ashen knuckles whitening even more. Just one hard shove and Dirk could knock him down like a brittle branch in a storm. Rage raised Dirk’s shoulder, but those clouded eyes – eyes that held no sight, but all the passion of a lightning bolt – stayed his body and stilled his wrath. Dirk swallowed the shame of his almost-actions, and salted them with fresh, soundless tears.

“Dirk, you must listen!” Einar roared. “You alone have the talent to face this evil. You must seek Zandor. He can train you for your calling. The sages are dying, Dirk, and their wisdom is dying with them. Give me your word that you will do as I say, and I will return your treasures.”

Dirk's reply caught in his throat. He felt as though he had no words left to give, let alone one that would carry the weight of his promise. The cold chewed on his toes through his drenched, icy boots, and Dirk knew he must leave soon. He was tired, tired from running. Chasing the fox... Chased by expectations... He had been running for years.

Einar approached Dirk, and hunched towards him holding the two journals, a rich bundle of purple cloth and patched leather, in the cloak-draped crook of his scrawny arm.

"These belong to Dirk Goran, son of Tyr and Edda, heir to the gift of Word Weaving, and one of Prys Maren's last hopes against dark powers that lie in wait for doubtful tomorrows," Einar whispered. "If you claim these books as yours, you also claim your destiny. What do you choose?"

"What would I have to do?" asked Dirk. His words sounded hollow, empty.

"Seek counsel from Zandor. He is the last of the Wind Dragons, and one of the seven sages of the Wildlands," Einar replied.

"Dragons?" Dirk queried. "But, I thought..."

"There are many thoughts you may no longer think. You must not breathe a word of this to anyone. Few dare to know, and fewer still understand. Go to Zandor, Dirk. There isn't much time," Einar insisted. He held the books out in front of him.

Dirk stretched out his arm, then hesitated. "I don't even know where to look for Zandor," he said.

“Ride north and west to the (Name) mountains. You will know the way.” Einar gestured with the journals towards the western horizon where the Wolf Star hung low in the sky. “Will you go?” asked Einar.

Dirk didn’t know what to do. The villagers were right. Einar was crazy. Dragons hadn’t been seen in Prys Maren in hundreds of years. Besides, how could he go off in search of anyone with this curfew in place? It was more than a week’s ride to get anywhere of consequence. The ache to go home, the need to get warm, the desire to read more of his mother’s words –these forces tempted his tongue to speak anything that would quell his pain.

“Will you go?” Einar asked again, louder. The white fox scampered to the old dwarf’s side. Its amethyst eyes pleaded.

“Yes,” said Dirk, averting his gaze. He reached for the books, and Einar proffered both with a breathy grin. Dirk fingered the familiar ridged seam of his journal, but his numb digits offered no sensation. Dirk’s feelings seemed as distant as the stars. Had his heart frozen along with his hands?

“Remember, Dirk. Your words are powerful. Do not use them carelessly,” Einar warned. “May the Great Wolf guide you safely home.”

APPENDIX B

ROUGH SUMMARY OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS OF *VIOLET VERSE*

This appendix contains rough sketches of the remaining chapters of *Violet Verse*, Book One in *The Colorsong Prophecy*. These are likely to change significantly as the narrative is written, and are simply guiding frames for the shape of the plot.

Chapter Three: Dirk has trouble finding his way home from the Birch forest. He didn't pay attention, and gets lost. He is about to pass out from cold and exhaustion. He sees a shadowy figure advancing towards him. It is Orm on his wolf mount, and Dirk is startled and frightened by him. He was out in a search party looking for Dirk. Orm then yells at Dirk and drags him home. Smoke knocks him over, glad to see him. Tyr is at home with Arick. Everyone relieved that Dirk is okay. Orm asks where Kelda is, thought she was with Tyr. Tyr says she went to check the workshed, and that Arick had given her the key. She would have called out if something were wrong. All debate how terrible Dirk is for various reasons. They grill him about why he left. Dirk doesn't know what to say. There is a howl at the doorway. Onyx enters alone looking terrible, with terror in her eyes.

Chapter Four: All search for Kelda. Onyx leads them to the workshed where the door is flapping in the breeze. Orm flies off handle and blames Dirk for Kelda's disappearance. Elders are notified. Dirk is placed under house arrest in care of his father. Dirk is not sure what to do. He is miserable. That night, it is foggy and the moons are still not visible. The next day, Tyr and Grayson escort Dirk to workshed. The members of the community look at him with mixture of scorn and pity. We find out more about Dirk's mother on this ride. Dirk questions Tyr about Einar. Tyr dismisses him as a crazy old man, but reveals that Edda often brought him food. Dirk keeps seeing flashes of white fur out of the corner of his eye, reminding him of his promise to Einar. The workday is horrible, and Dirk fouls up an important order. Tyr arrives to escort Dirk home just before sunset. Dirk sees flashes of fur again, and is convinced the fox is following him. Orm is waiting for Tyr when they get home. He has been searching for Kelda all day. He tells them that the second ambassador has come back from the Farasa desert and that they claim to know nothing of the disappearances. In fact, they were rude to the ambassador, and suggested that he was trying to accuse them, because the people of the Province of Farasa are nocturnal. The elders believe they have something to do with the disappearances, and the Lupen dwarves prepare for war. In the middle of the night, a new poem magically appears in Edda's journal urging Dirk to hurry, and revealing the location of Zandor's palace. Dirk and Smoke escape through the window under cover of

darkness. Smoke is afraid to jump off sill. He must take responsibility and go seek Zandor. Dirk and Smoke set off on their quest.

Chapter Five: They travel west over the steppes towards Zandor's palace in the Biolline Bluffs. Just before dawn, Dirk has a brush with a Shadowing. Smoke saves him, but it is not clear to Dirk what is actually happening. They are tired and hungry. They find a place to camp for a few hours in daylight. They travel one more day and night. The following morning, they reach the edge of the lake and can see the bluffs on the other side. The lake is frozen nearly solid. They attempt to cross the lake on foot, but they hit a patch of thin ice. Dirk falls part of the way through the ice, but is able to pull himself up. His satchel falls into the icy water. He is able to retrieve it but the ink in his journal runs and smears, and the pages are damaged by the water. Somehow his mother's journal isn't ruined. He almost turns back, but he notices fox footprints on the ice. They cross the rest of the lake and begin to climb the bluffs. Finally, they see a palace made entirely of ice at the top of the highest bluff. When they reach Zandor's palace at sunset, there is a sudden gust of wind and they are almost blown off into the icy, grey Northern Sea. They are knocked everywhere in windstorm, until Dirk recognizes this is no ordinary wind. As he is being tossed around, he is aware of words forming in his mind. As the wind pushed Dirk closer and closer to the precipice, his mind became a loom that created a tapestry of understanding. He realizes that the wind is talking to him, and that he

understands its message. It repeats one question over and over, “Do winds swim? Do winds swim?” The letters weave together in his mind and he discovers the wind’s name. The Wind Spirit is the guardian of WordWeaving. Dirk calls out its name, Wisdom’s Wind, and the wind calms. He is lifted on the back of the wind, hovering in front of the palace gates, which open before him. He calls to Smoke to wait outside.

Chapter Six: Dirk enters Zandor’s palace, which is described in detail. He is carried to Zandor, who is expecting him. Zandor is huge and shimmering with faded iridescent scales. He tells Dirk that he is late. Zandor takes Dirk to the center of the palace where The Colorsong Prophecy is magically etched in ice. He explains the history of Prys Maren to Dirk, and identifies himself as one of seven sages of the old way, who must pass their knowledge and lore to a new generation. He tells Dirk that all the dragons are dying off and the Shadow Lord has risen again. The Shadow Lord seeks dominion using the powers of his master that the dragons defeated by creating the second moon long ago. The races of Prys Maren distrust one another and their heroes doubt themselves. It is doubt that feeds shadow, and these doubts have freed the minions of Shadow. Dirk asks how the Dragons created the second moon. Zandor offers to show him, Dirk climbs on Zandor’s back. Dirk tells Smoke to stay and guard the palace. Zandor takes Dirk on a tour explaining the lay of the land and the people who live there, pointing out the homes of each of the Seven Sages of the Old Way. (sea – Jessha the Mermaid, sky – Liviya the

elfin Griffin rider, clay – Caron the Dryad, stone – the Giant, ice – Zandor the Wind Dragon, fire – Bardred Egam the elfin sorcerer, sand –Kaliq the Djinn) There are dark fogs of Shadow hovering over each of the Provinces. Dirk voices the biases of his own people. Zandor tells him of other perspectives. As they fly back towards the palace, they see dark Shadow shapes flying below them. Zandor tells Dirk about the Shadowings. Zandor tells Dirk the Shadow Lord is powerful and it will take great skill and courage to defeat him. The Shadow portal to Gondra’s moon has been reopened. Dirk must come back to the palace with him to study so he may master the forms that will focus and direct his wild magic. Dirk asks why me? Why not warriors or diplomats? Not warriors because war sows fear and doubt in all who must fight. This will only increase the power of Shadow. Not diplomats because diplomacy is the art of calling things what you wish them to be. Of your people, only you have the gift to name things as they are. They return to the palace. It is a wreck.

Chapter Seven: Whatever has destroyed the palace is gone, but shadows linger on the walls. Zandor says it is no longer safe here. Where is Smoke? Zandor tells Dirk to hold on. Zandor swoops through the ice rubble to the center of his palace with immense speed. Dirk hangs on for dear life. They see a shadow vortex about to swallow Smoke, who is valiantly defending the tablet containing the Prophecy. Zandor gets goods including quill, and scoops up Smoke on his back just as the Shadow vortex whirls out of

control. There is an “explosion” of dark and silence. Zandor flies east as fast as he can to meet the sunrise, staying just ahead of the Shadow. Zandor drops Dirk and Smoke at a safe place. He is exhausted, and the pink sunrise is just warming the eastern horizon. Zandor gives Dirk the Feather of the Frost Falcon, the same quill his mother used to write indelibly in her journal, and wisdom. He tells Dirk that he must continue on his quest to save Prys Maren from permanent darkness. Time is short, and the next chapter must be written. There is too much to explain. Zandor doesn’t know if he will live to do it. When Zandor doubts, his power ebbs. Dirk is resolute. He tries to tell Zandor all will be okay. Zandor acknowledges that Dirk has all he needs if he has confidence. He tells Dirk to listen to Wisdom’s Wind, as it will always speak truth. But he must WordWeave to distill meaning. Zandor dies smiling, and the torch is passed. Dirk studies the poem and writes the next verse of the Colorsong Prophecy using the Frost Falcon’s Feather. He wraps the tablet in Zandor’s silks, and ties it to Smoke’s back. Dirk sends Smoke home with the Prophecy and a note that he will free the prisoners of Shadow. Smoke goes back to the Lupen Village with strict orders to give the parcel only to Tyr.

Chapter Eight: (note: These journey chapter is intentionally skeletal in plot. I would like to leave this open to discover the sub-plots that Dirk himself discovers.) Dirk sets out alone to find the Shadow portal. He trains in using quill. He encounters Wildlanders, some friends, some not. Must choose between helping female Wildlander in danger and

retrieving journal. Encounters minions of Shadow, perhaps Troglodytes?. Fox appears again, with journal in teeth. Dirk arrives at his destination and discovers that the entrance to the portal is only accessible to creatures of Shadow.

Chapter Nine: (note: These journey chapter is intentionally skeletal in plot. I would like to leave this open to discover the sub-plots that Dirk himself discovers.) Dirk baits the Shadowing because he carries his own light and doesn't need sound. The Shadowing captures him.. Dirk is placed in a dark cave on Gondra's moon. Doom, doom, doom. Shadow plans to take over Prys Maren. Dirk writes the portal open and helps the others, including Kelda, escape. Aud is interested in him. The Shadow Lord sees what is happening and magically closes the portal before Dirk can escape with the others.

Chapter Ten: Dirk confronts the Shadow Lord. The Shadow Lord says that Dirk has only helped him by releasing the voices of doom, sowing seeds of fear and doubt. Dirk says no, the words of wisdom have already taken hold. Hope has gone before, in the seventh chapter of *The Colorsong Prophecy*. Shadow Lord wields what appears to be a wand. Dirk listens to Wisdom's Wind and hears words forming in his mind. The wind says, "Shadow Lord! Respect Dragon's last cry." The letters WordWeave together in his mind. Dirk calls out, "A Drow holds Gondra's crystal scepter!" He reaches for the Frost Falcon's Feather to name the scepter. In his journal, he writes (kenning for scepter)

There is a major transformation. Gondra's Moon is illuminated again with the violet reflection of thousands of amethyst crystals. Much light and sparks. Cleansed scepter burns off the shadow and flies into Dirk's hands. Dirk has the Shadow Lord in a compromised position. Dirk could kill the lord, chooses not to. The Shadow Lord utters a dark spell that silences Wisdom's Wind and reopens the Shadow portal just long enough to escape into the night; he will be back. He closes the Shadow portal behind him, leaving Dirk trapped alone on Gondra's Moon.

Chapter Eleven: Dirk tries to open the portal with his words, but fails. Wisdom's Wind is silenced by the Shadow Lord's spell. Finally, Dirk uses the scepter to open a new portal of Violet Light. He goes through the portal to Prys Maren. On the way home, he is chased by Lacklusters. Dirk returns to Lupen village where there is a pack gathering in progress. Dirk learns that war with the Farasa had been averted by Smoke's delivery, but that the Shadow Lord had led the kidnapped dwarves to believe that he was in cohorts with the Causaxum. Orm is rallying the dwarves to prepare for war against the Causaxum. Dirk walks to the Septe and stops the meeting. He shows the scepter and tells of the retreat of the Shadow Lord. He gives the message that all must have confidence and trust one another to combat Shadow, for he will surely be back. Orm loses face. Village appreciates Dirk, appointed ambassador to the Wildlanders. Tyr is proud. Dirk asks Arrick permission to get his things from the work shed. Dirk creates a

new journal and writes a poem about his mother. He sees a flash of silver white fur again. He runs to the window to see a trail of fox footprints in the new snow. A shadow falls across the fox footprints. All is not over.