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Additional Keywords

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EDITORIAL: DIVINATION AND PROPHECY IN MYTHOPOEIC LITERATURE

DIVINATION, PROPHECY, AND OTHER KINDS OF PROGNOSTICATION have long played an important role in mythopoeic literature, often in conjunction with characters seeking the truth behind some obscure situation, as well as information about the future. Galadriel and her mirror in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), the Happy Medium and her crystal ball in Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962), Igneous Cutwell and his Caroc cards in Terry Pratchett's *Mort* (1983), the Weirdin rediscovered by Sara Kendell in Charles de Lint's *Moonheart* (1984), and Lyra Silvertongue and her alethiometer in Phillip Pullman's *The Golden Compass* (1995), are just a few of many characters who future- or truth-tell with the aid of a tool. Prophets may sometimes be distinguished by their lack of reliance on such external devices. For example, in C.S. Lewis's *The Horse and His Boy* (1954), a centaur prophesies that Cor will one day save Archenland. However, prophecies are often disassociated from their source and dependent on folklore for transmission, as for instance, is that recounted by Mr. Beaver in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950) about the sons of Adam and daughters of Eve sitting on the thrones of Cair Paravel. Distinctions between types of prognosticators or the nature of their work may become unclear if the practitioner takes more than one approach. For example, in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003), Sybill Trelawney goes into a trance and prophesies that a boy will defeat Voldemort, but she also uses crystal balls, tea leaves, and cards to inspire her second sight—she draws the Tower prior to Dumbledore's fall in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005). In addition, future-tellings of all kinds tend to be vague and fragmentary: as the succubus tells Roland in Stephen King's *The Gunslinger* (1982): "We see in part, and thus is the mirror of prophecy darkened" (182).

Future-tellers and their pronouncements are often not well received or taken seriously. Even the predictions of no less a magician than Merlin were made the butt of one of Shakespeare's jokes in *King Lear*. Not only is this historical play set centuries before Merlin is said to have lived, but the Fool pretending to prophesy Merlin's prophecy recasts the content so that the lines make little sense, except as parody.

This is a brave night to cool a courtesan.
I'll speak a prophecy ere I go.
When priests are more in word than matter,
When brewers mar their malt with water,
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
No heretics burned but wenches' suitors,
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion.

When every case in law is right,
No squire in debt nor no poor knight,
When slanders do not live in tongues,
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs,

When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,
And bawds and whores do churches build—
Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,
That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time. (Act 3, ll. 80-97)

Cynicism or light-hearted humor remain common responses to predictions, from the daily newspaper horoscopes to New Year's Eve "year ahead" projections, yet there is no discounting the mythopoeic relationship between "that which is foretold" and the sacred truths beyond what is mistaken—often by protagonists and readers alike—for "true" reality. Certainly, authors of mythopoeia enjoy taking Arthurian-related prophecies seriously, reworking them endlessly to create new plot twists in otherwise familiar stories. The merging of King Arthur with the return of the Fisher King, for example, is evident in C.S. Lewis's *Space Trilogy* (1938, 1943, 1945), J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* (1954), Stephen King's Dark Tower novels (1982 ff), Tim Powers's *Last Call* (1992), Tom Deitz's *Soulsmith Trilogy* (1991, 1992, 1993), and many more besides.

More specifically, all of the mythopoeic novels addressed in the papers collected here incorporate future-telling as a significant means of weaving events of the present together with those of the past and potential futures. The predictions—delivered by astrology, dreams, future scrying, Tarot reading, visions, and so forth—invariably serve as pointers away from the familiar and mundane toward the mythological and thereby become truth-tellings as well as future-tellings. There is a powerful cyclical aspect to the manifestation of this ultimate and sacred mythopoeic reality in *The Lord of the Rings*, *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* (2004), and the Dark Tower novels, and in these three, as well as Lovecraft's oeuvre, many protagonists ultimately have little choice but to accept

their roles in this manifestation while simultaneously losing their foothold in what was once normal for them: the fate of Frodo is a profound demonstration of this experience.

While this transition does lead to fulfillment and better days for at least some of the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings*, many characters in *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, the Dark Tower novels, and Lovecraft's universe may well have been better off had they not been rendered so special by prophecy, prediction, and their pursuit of truth. The genre-based element distinguishing this range of outcomes is, of course, horror. As Carol Matthews so clearly demonstrates, by way of dreams, geomancy, or other means the Lovecraft quester discovers that universe is more deeply frightening than anything he could possibly have imagined. Kathryn Laity's analysis of the Tarot readings performed by Childermas and Vinculus shows that Strange and Norrell enjoy mastery in magic, only to find that that mastery brings great suffering to others and also isolates them from the world as they once knew it. My own paper shows that Roland, whose cards are read by his nemesis, has the satisfaction of knowing when the cartomancer is dead and of saving multiple universes, and then discovers that he is doomed to keep saving those universes over and over again. Obviously, mythopoeia is not all about happy endings, but foretellings and prophecies may render any of its characters—as Professor Trelawney once said of Harry in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*—"a wonderful Object" for its readers.

EMILY E. AUGER (PhD), the editor of this special section of *Mythlore* #132, is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film 1940-2010* (2016) and *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks* (2004), editor of the multi-author *Tarot in Culture Volumes I and II* (2014), and the area chair for Tarot and Other Methods of Divination at the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association conference. She is also co-editing with Janet Brennan Croft the papers of artist and Inklings scholar Nancy-Lou Patterson, including *Ransoming the Waste Land: Papers on C.S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, Chronicles of Narnia, and Other Works, Volumes I and II* (2016), *Detecting Wimsey: Papers on Dorothy L. Sayers's Detective Fiction* (2017), and the forthcoming *Divining Tarot: Papers on Charles Williams's The Greater Trumps and Other Works*.

