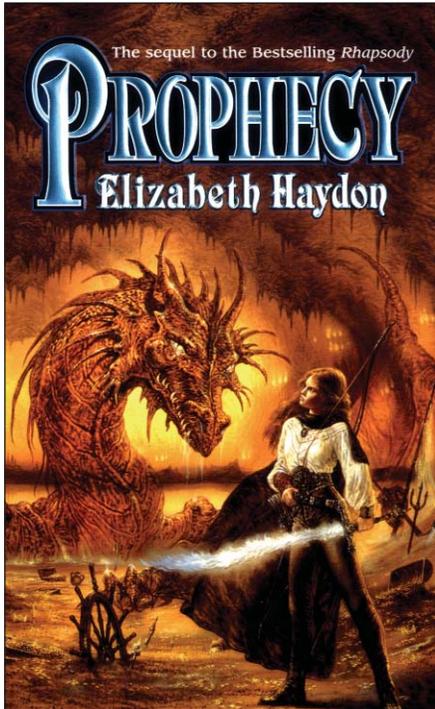




Elizabeth Haydon

Prophecy



“Haydon’s epic saga of the endless battle between light and darkness resounds with the richness of ancient myths reworked into new forms.”

—LIBRARY JOURNAL

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth Haydon has traveled the world, sampling the cultures and gathering the experiences which add such extraordinary depth and authenticity to her fiction. She enjoys anthropology, and is an accomplished herbalist, harpist, and madrigal singer. She lives with her family on the East Coast, where she works as an editor in educational publishing.

ABOUT THE BOOK

*The Three shall come, leaving early, arriving late,
The lifestages of all men:
Child of Blood, Child of Earth, Child of the Sky.*

*Each man, formed in blood and born in it,
Walks the Earth and sustained by it,
Reaching to the sky, and sheltering beneath it,
He ascends there only in his ending, becoming part of the stars.*

*Blood gives new beginning, Earth gives sustenance,
The Sky gives dreams in life—eternity in death.
Thus shall the Three be, one to the other.*

Every reader longs to fall beneath a storyteller’s mystic spell, to be swept away by the thrill of adventure and the power of imagination. When Elizabeth Haydon’s first book *Rhapsody* was released in 1999, readers found themselves captivated just so, quickly becoming enchanted with her fresh approach to epic fantasy and the startling strength of her fully-realized world. Critics too were impressed with her tale of the resourceful and beautiful *Rhapsody*, a fledgling singer of magic, and her equally fascinating companions as they undertook a journey through time to escape the ravages of the F’dor, a being of fearsome evil and unimaginable power.

That wondrous story continues in *Prophecy*, as Rhapsody and her companions, the assassin-king Achmed, and the barbaric fighter Grunthor, each discover their own critical role in fulfilling an ancient legend. Yet, the foul F'dor has survived the journey as well, and has not forgotten their escape. And even as the companions begin to piece together the scattered fragments of destiny that will guide them to the final confrontation, the F'dor bides its time, gathering strength and allies, ever growing in power and menace, and all the while, hiding in plain sight, swathed in the guise of a friend. Showing a mastery of character and plot that heralds the full flowering of a gifted storyteller, *Prophecy* continues the fantasy saga that is destined to become a classic.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Creation and renewal are two of the major themes in the book, and yet they are always balanced against a backdrop of destruction and death. This might be seen as the eternal struggle between the light and the darkness, but what else does the author say about the dual nature of her characters and how does that duality affect the plot?
2. As a Liringlas, or Skysinger, proficient in the art of Naming, Rhapsody understands the true power of a name. In the book, this power manifests itself in several ways, perhaps most notably by the hold that one being can have over another simply by knowing their "True Name." What is it about one's name that could give others such power? Does this same power of naming—albeit to a lesser degree—exist in our own world?
3. When the Patriarch gives Rhapsody his ring of office for safekeeping, he says these words:
"...crowns of kings and rings or staves of holy men are often repositories for the wisdom of their offices....It is not just a symbol; it holds the actual office, and its powers, safe. The collective wisdom gives each king, each Patriarch, the additional wisdom he needs to rule or to lead, rather than just having to rely on his own."
What do you think he meant? Was it the literal truth, that magical powers are physically vested in these items, or was he speaking of a more symbolic power? What role does tradition or lineage have in the perception of power? In the actuality of power?

4. While Rhapsody is described as an extraordinary beauty, and Grunthor and Achmed are each depicted as monstrous to behold, we know that outward appearances are not reliable indicators of character. Deception through appearance, in fact, is a favorite method of destruction preferred by the F'dor. How does the author use the idea of appearance as a device for plot development? Is there more than "don't judge a book by its cover" at work here?

5. As King of the Firbolg race, Achmed the Snake maintains a savage emotional distance, as befitting the gruff demeanor of his subjects, yet, towards Rhapsody, he betrays an unspoken tenderness. What characteristics does Rhapsody possess that enable her to pierce Achmed's wall of ferocity? What does Achmed offer to Rhapsody that draws her so strongly to him? Along with Grunthor and Jo, they might even be said to make up an odd family unit. What familial role would be assigned to each?

6. Ashe is among the most complex characters in the book, an enigma for reasons that become increasingly clear as the plot unfolds. The author actively uses him as a mystery to be unwrapped, doling out pieces of his tortured past that take the plot into new and unexpected directions. Is this an effective device for driving the story? Was the author effective in surprising you? In making you believe the connections?

7. Memory and legend are powerfully infused throughout *Prophecy*, and several characters, including the Grandmother, the Patriarch, and Oleandra, are virtual repositories of memory and lore, relating the history behind events and driving characters towards their destinies. How does the knowledge of each of these characters contribute to Rhapsody's ultimate realization that she is indeed the *Iliachenu'ar*?

8. *Prophecy* takes place in a world inhabited by many races, which are then in turn classified as descended from one of five elements: Ether, Fire, Water, Air and Earth. But only Fire, from which the F'dor is descended, is described as destructive, consuming what feeds it. Yet, Rhapsody, a child of the Air, commands the powers of fire for her bidding. What does this ability say about the relationship among the elements, and how does this skill prepare her for her battle with the F'dor?

PRAISE FOR ELIZABETH HAYDON

“Respectable ideas, plotting, and characters.”

—*BOOKLIST ON PROPHECY*

“Haydon’s epic saga of the endless battle between light and darkness resounds with the richness of ancient myths reworked into new forms.”

—*LIBRARY JOURNAL ON PROPHECY*

“Distinguished by its superior wit and intelligence, this fantasy debut opens what looks to be an outstanding saga.... This huge and complex novel draws expertly on deep scholarship in Celtic, Norse, and animist folklore, myth and history.... One of the finest high fantasy debuts in years.”

—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, STARRED REVIEW ON RHAPSODY*

“A stunningly told tale by a new fantasy author who is sure to go far.” —ANNE MCCAFFREY ON *RHAPSODY*

“A powerful novel.” —PIERS ANTHONY ON *RHAPSODY*

“The tale’s credible mythology and ancient lore; its characters, who are convincing in personality, powers, and interrelationships; a truly menacing evil presence; and leavening humor combine in a truly satisfying fantasy adventure that ends on just the right note to leave rapt readers craving a sequel.” —*BOOKLIST ON RHAPSODY*