

PROPHECY AND AMBIGUITY: THE ORACULAR ART OF SYBILL TRELAWNEY IN HARRY POTTER IN LIGHT OF ANCIENT GREEK ORACLE TRADITIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the role of oracles in Greek mythology and how the concept is explored in the literary work "Harry Potter." Greek oracles, such as the famous Oracle of Delphi, served as human intermediaries between gods and mortals, offering divine predictions and guidance. The figure of Sybill Trelawney in "Harry Potter" reflects that oracular tradition. Initially discredited due to her eccentric nature, her prophecies prove essential to the plot, especially the one concerning

the birth of Harry Potter and his confrontation with Voldemort. Trelawney's narrative highlights the ambiguity of prophecies, a trait shared with Greek oracles, which often provide enigmatic responses. This study analyzes the influence of Greek mythology on the representation of the oracle in "Harry Potter," emphasizing the importance of free will and the characters' choices in the face of destiny.

KEYWORDS: Oracles; Greek Mythology; Harry Potter; Prophecies.

Profecia e Ambiguidade: A arte oracular de Sibila Trelawney em 'Harry Potter' à luz das tradições dos antigos oráculos gregos

RESUMO

Este artigo examina o papel dos oráculos na mitologia grega e como esse conceito é explorado na obra literária "Harry Potter". Os oráculos gregos, como o famoso Oráculo de Delfos, serviam como intermediários humanos entre deuses e mortais, oferecendo previsões e orientações divinas. A figura da Sibila Trelawney em "Harry Potter" reflete essa tradição oracular. Embora inicialmente desacreditada devido à sua natureza excêntrica, suas previsões se revelam essenciais à trama,

especialmente a profecia sobre o nascimento de Harry Potter e seu confronto com Voldemort. A narrativa de Trelawney destaca a ambiguidade das profecias, um traço compartilhado com os oráculos gregos, que frequentemente apresentavam respostas enigmáticas. Este estudo analisa como a mitologia grega influencia a representação do oráculo em "Harry Potter", enfatizando a importância da ideia de livre arbítrio e das escolhas dos personagens em face do destino.

Palavras chave: Oráculos; Mitologia Grega; Harry Potter; Profecias.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Bridging of Mortals and Gods through the Ancient Greek Oracle

The ancient Greek oracle served as an intermediary between gods and mortals, offering predictions, counsel, and divine guidance. Oracles, whether locations or individuals, were the conduit through which gods were consulted on personal, collective, and political matters, providing glimpses into the future. Oracle responses, specific to certain deities, designated places, and human intermediaries were pivotal in guiding human actions and open to diverse interpretations, often contributing to human learning. Inquiries to the oracle¹ encompassed various topics, from general subjects like politics, warfare, agriculture, and marriages to specific concerns such as health or cure of ailments.

Oracles held immense prestige and reputation, transcending mere predictions to becoming centers of worship and oracular wisdom. Among the most renowned ones was the Oracle of Delphi, dedicated to the Sun god Apollo. It was located at the world's center in Delphi, considered the "navel of the Earth," at the foothills of Mount Parnassus. It was administered by a priestess, also known as Pythia.

Priests and priestesses, irrespective of gender, acted as intermediaries between gods and humans, providing counsel rooted in a communication channel bridging human and divine realms. Communication could be established through various means (e.g., vapors rising from the earth's depths and inducing trance states, as in the case of Apollo's Pythia)² and, alternatively, through ceremonies involving incense offerings and sacrifices dedicated to the gods in their respective temples. Oracle responses were often enigmatic and conveyed through signs, such as observations of animal behavior³, celestial formations, or analyses of bird entrails⁴, or even through a trance state achieved by the human intermediary in divinatory practices. Notably, the gender identification of intermediaries was not predetermined and could be male or female.

An illustrative example of an enigmatic response is Apollo's Pythia being asked by King Croesus about going to war against the Persians. The oracle replied: "By crossing the Halys, Croesus will destroy a great empire."⁵ (Aristotle et al., 2005, p. 254).

¹ A character named "The Oracle" appears in "The Matrix." She is crucial in guiding Neo, the main character, on his journey to understand and confront the Matrix, a virtual reality system controlled by machines. The Oracle believes Neo has a pivotal role, but her future vision is not infallible and is subject to interpretations. She is one of the first to refer to Neo as "The One," who has the potential to break the cycle of the Matrix and bring balance to the war between humans and machines. She also makes Neo question what it means to be "The One" and the nature of prophecy.

² She received this name because Apollo defeated Python, the guardian of the Delphic oracle, took Geia's place, and therefore gained the epithet "Pythian" (BRANDÃO, 1987, p. 94-97). In honor of these deeds, the "Pythian Games" were established.

³ Eurípides (2016, vv. 373-376), Torrano (2017, vv. 744-748).

⁴ Torrano (2016, vv. 838-840), Torrano (2019, vv. 211-213).

⁵ Herodotus, Book 1, Paragraphs 53 and 91. Translation by Manuel Alexandre Júnior, Paulo Farmhouse Alberto, and Abel do Nascimento Pena (Aristotle et al., 2005, p. 254).

The ambiguity in the response lies in the kingdom to be destroyed, i.e., the Persian one or the Lydian one, over which Croesus ruled. However, the oracle's prediction was not incorrect. A kingdom would win and the other would lose, i.e., indeed, a kingdom would be defeated. Croesus believed the prophecy favored him and attacked Cyrus's Persia and was ultimately defeated (BRANDÃO, 1987, p. 98).

Heracleitus's fragment (contains?) 247 comments on this passage from the Oracle of Delphi: "The sovereign god, whose oracle is at Delphi, neither reveals, nor conceals anything, but manifests himself through signs." In other words, Apollo does not hide the truth, but makes his will understood" (Brandão, 1987, p. 98).

Another legendary oracle in Greek mythology was Tiresias, who played an essential role in several stories and is known for his gender transformation and prophetic abilities. In a critical incident, he encountered two snakes mating and, by divine whim, struck one of them, killing the female, and immediately turning into a woman. Seven years later, in the same place, he encountered the same situation with another pair of snakes, acted in the same way. He killed one of the snakes - this time, the male one - and returned to the male sex (Grimal, 2005, p. 450). According to his legend, on another occasion, he was summoned by Zeus and Hera to resolve the following question: the king and the queen of the Olympian gods were debating on who experienced more pleasure during sexual intercourse, men or women. Towards settling the dispute, they turned to Tiresias, who had the rare perspective of having lived as both sexes. Tiresias declared that women experience sexual pleasure much more intensely than men, thus enraging Hera, who blinded him as punishment for his answer. Zeus, feeling compassionate, compensated for Tiresias' blindness by granting him the gift of prophecy and the possibility of living a long human life (Grimal, 2005, p. 450).

The blind seer became one of the most famous diviners in Greek mythology, capable of foreseeing the future and making accurate prophecies. Tiresias played a crucial role in several mythological stories, advising heroes and rulers with his visions of destiny. Examples include the prophecy to Odysseus in the realm of the dead in the *Odyssey* and the one to Oedipus in Sophocles' play regarding the tragic fate of Laius' son.⁶

TIRÉSIAS:

I shall go, but before I do, I will reveal what brought me —
Your scowl cannot deter me:
The one you seek, inquiring about his whereabouts,
because of Laius's death, here he stands,
shouted about at every corner,

⁶ Λαίε Λαβδακίδη, παίδων γένος ὄλβιον αἰτεῖς.
δώσω τοι φίλον υἷον ἀτὰρ πεπρωμένον ἔστί,
τοῦ παιδὸς χερσὶν λείψειν φάος: ὧς γὰρ ἔνευσα. (*Epigram 14.67 — Anthologia Graeca*, [s.d.]

Translation:

Oracle given to Laius of Thebes

You, Laius, son of Labdacus, seek a blessed offspring.

I will grant you a beloved son! Nevertheless, it is destined that you shall leave the light at the hands of this son. So have I decreed! (JESUS, 2017, p. 88).

considered a foreigner, yet he is true Theban,
a tragic fate. Blind — though now
he sees — a beggar (once wealthy), uncertain in his staff,
he will venture into foreign lands.
And then we shall see him as both father and brother
to his children; as for his mother,
he will be her husband and regarding his father,
both his partner in bed and his murderer⁷.
Consider this in your palace.
If I lie, say: *false prophet!* (Vieira, 2020, vv. 447 – 462, p. 59)

In the linguistic domain, the Greek language had distinct terms to designate various aspects of the oracle (e.g., "khresmós", for a divine response, "phátis", for the act of delivering a response, "professes" or "mantis", for the human intermediary between god and man, characterized by being imbued with the deity and possessing it internally, and "kherestérion", for the physical location where the oracle was pronounced).

The practice of consulting oracles dates back to the Archaic Period and was significantly influenced by oriental and Egyptian traditions. Among the oldest Greek oracles, the one of Dodona stands out. Dedicated to Zeus and located in the city of Dodona, the oracle remarkably interprets the sounds produced by the wind in the leaves of sacred trees, especially oak trees, to obtain divine answers. The priests and priestesses of Dodona were tasked with deciphering those sounds and interpreting them as divine messages.

Among the most notable priests and priestesses who played crucial roles in mediating between mortals and divinities, conducting rituals and interpretations, and conveying oracle messages that shaped the culture and religiosity of the time and even influenced cities during wars are the priests and Pythia in Delphi, the priests of Eleusis, the guardians of the Olympic Games in Olympia, the priestesses of Athena on the Acropolis of Athens, the priests of Dionysus, the priestesses of Artemis in Ephesus (known as "melissas"), the priests of Asclepius, and Cassandra, the prophetess of Troy, discredited by Apollo.

2 CASSANDRA, THE UNCREDITED PRIESTESS

The figure of Cassandra, originating from the city of Troy, assumes a tragic and emblematic role in Greek mythology, standing out as one of the most famous yet disbelieved prophets of all times. Her influence extends not only to the narrative of Troy, but also to Greek mythology as a whole. Daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba, she was a Trojan princess. According to the mythology, Apollo, the god of prophecy, fell in love with her and granted her the gift of prophetic vision in exchange for her romantic favors. While accepting the gift, Cassandra rejected Apollo's romantic advances and, in retaliation, he "spat in her mouth, taking away her power of persuasion"

⁷ It is important to note that Oedipus had already heard a prophecy from the Oracle of Delphi about "killing his father and marrying his mother." This fact led Oedipus to avoid returning to Corinth, his parents' land, as at this point, he did not know he was not the son of Polybus and Merope (Stephanides, 2016a, p. 10). He decided to go to Thebes, where he encountered Laius at the crossroads (Ribeiro de Oliveira, 2019).

(Grimal, 2005, p. 77; Stephanides, 2016b, p. 39). In other words, as a cruel irony of fate, she made accurate prophecies believed by no one.

The tragic Trojan princess made accurate predictions about significant events, such as the fall of Troy, the death of Agamemnon, and her tragic fate (Ésquilo, 2003, vv. 1090-1093, 1114-1118, 1136-1138), yet no one believed her prophecies. Her most famous prediction concerns the episode of the Trojan Horse - she warned the horse was a Greek ruse, which would result in the city's destruction (Grimal, 2005, p. 77; Stephanides, 2016b, p. 39), a warning that was tragically ignored.

After the Trojan War, Cassandra sought refuge in Athena's temple, believing she would be protected there. Even when the Greeks sacked the city and many Trojan women were enslaved, Cassandra remained inviolate.⁸ Agamemnon took her as a war prize (Grimal, 2005, p. 77).

Cassandra's saga represents a complex tragedy in Greek mythology. It symbolizes the impotence of possessing knowledge of the future, but being unable to alter or avoid predestined events. Her story mediates the inexorability of fate and the challenges of communicating truth when no one is willing to listen.

Cassandra's reputation is linked to Sybill Trelawney from "Harry Potter," since she, too, is discredited and ridiculed for her prophetic gifts. However, her prophecies, like Cassandra's, are often proven correct.

3 THE ANCIENT SIBYLS

In ancient Greece, female oracles were known as Sibyls, Pythias, or Pithias. A myth claims the first Sibyl, from whom all others derived their names, was said to be the daughter of the Trojan Dardanus and Neso, daughter of Croesus (Smith, 1849⁹, pp. 814-815; Grimal, 2005, pp. 416-417), whereas another states Sibyl was the daughter of Zeus and Lamia, the daughter of Poseidon.

According to Smith (1849), the name *Σίβυλλα* derives from *Δίος* and *βουλή*, meaning "counsel of Zeus." This Sibyl prophesied in her temple and lived mainly in Samos, Claros, Delos, and Delphi.

Grimal (2005) claimed the most famous Hellenic Sibyl was the one from Erythrae, in Libya, daughter of Theodorus and a nymph. She was born in a cave on Mount Corycus and prophesied in verse from a very young age. Her parents consecrated her to Apollo, who predicted an arrow from the god would kill her. It is said she lived nine human lives, each lasting one hundred and ten years.

Another tradition, also in Grimal (2005), identifies the Sibyl of Erythrae with the Sibyl of Cumae in Campania, and Smith (1849, p. 815) also assigned her the following names: Herophila,

⁸ The 2002 film *The Scorpion King* features a prophetess named Cassandra, who is frequently used by Memnon, the film's main antagonist, to foresee his enemies' movements and assist in his war strategies. The priestess in the film maintains a similarity of chastity with the Trojan princess. However, the similarities end there, as the cinematic Cassandra's prophetic credibility is compromised after she loses her chastity. In contrast, the mythological Cassandra is discredited from the beginning of her career as a priestess of Apollo.

⁹ Smith (1849, p. 814-815) provides sources from ancient authors referring to the Sibyls.

Demo, Phemonoe, Deiphobe, Demophile, and Amalthea. This Sibyl uttered oracles in a cave and Apollo granted her life as long as the grains of sand her hand could hold. However, she could no longer return to Erythrae and settled in Cumae. She died when the Erythreans sent a letter sealed with the seal of her homeland. She is also known to have gone to Rome during the reign of Tarquin the Proud, carrying nine collections of oracles. She allowed the king to know them, but the price was too high - with each refusal, she burned three collections. Tarquin bought the last three and deposited them in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus. After fulfilling her mission, the Sibyl disappeared. During the Roman Republic and up to the time of Augustus, the "Sibylline Books" greatly influenced Roman religion and were consulted in times of disaster, prodigy, or extraordinary events. Special magistrates were responsible for the preservation and consultation of those books. In Virgil's "Aeneid," the Sibyl of Cumae is a fundamental guide to Aeneas on his journey to the Underworld.¹⁰

Apart from the aforementioned Sibyls, brief references are made to others (the Sibyl of Samos, called Phyllo, and the Hebrew Sibyl, cited by Pausanias and known as Sabe, daughter of Berosus and Erymanthe) (Smith, 1849, p. 815).

4 "THE BOY WHO LIVED": THE SAGA OF A WIZARD BOY

"*Harry Potter*" is a magical saga by J.K. Rowling that begins with "*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*". The story follows the extraordinary journey of Harry Potter, an orphan raised by his Muggle (non-magical) relatives, the Dursleys. On his 11th birthday, Harry discovers he is a wizard and is accepted into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

The plot revolves around the struggle between Harry and Lord Voldemort¹¹, the dark wizard who seeks power and immortality. Voldemort attempted to kill Harry as a baby, but the curse backfired, leaving Harry with a lightning-shaped scar on his forehead and marking him as "The Boy Who Lived." Harry uncovers secrets about his past, his parents' deaths, and his special connection with Voldemort as he grows.

Throughout the seven books, Harry Potter, accompanied by his loyal friends Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, faces unimaginable challenges. Together, they discover magical artifacts, confront fantastic creatures, and battle Voldemort's followers, Death Eaters. This epic saga narrates their adventures and delves into profound themes such as true friendship, courage, love, and loyalty. While investigating Harry's dark past, including his parents' fall at the hands of the terrible dark wizard, Lord Voldemort, the characters confront the eternal battle between good and evil. Through those experiences, the series offers a powerful reflection on human nature and the importance of fundamental values.

Harry Potter's epic narrative deepens as he and his friends unravel mysteries, battle Dementors, discover magical relics, and face Death Eaters. The tension culminates in the final

¹⁰ Just as Odysseus was accompanied by Tiresias when he descended to Hades, Aeneas was accompanied by Sibyl.

¹¹ Also known as Tom Marvolo Riddle (original English name), Tom Servolo Riddle (Brazilian translation), Tom Riddle (Rowling, 1999a, p. 174, 234).

battle between good and evil, in which Harry, now a young adult, bravely leads against Voldemort's malevolent forces. With the help of his friends and allies, Harry defeats Voldemort, restoring peace to the magical world.

The "*Harry Potter*" book series is a magical adventure and a rich exploration of universal themes such as love, loss, prejudice, and ethical dilemmas. By defeating Voldemort, Harry embodies human resilience and the belief that love is the most powerful magic of all. The beloved worldwide saga has become a cultural phenomenon, expanding into movies, plays, and related products. Beyond captivating readers and audiences with its thrilling twists and compelling characters, the story has left a lasting legacy in literature and pop culture. It stands out as a timeless work that continues to inspire generations.

In the Harry Potter universe, the Oracle, represented primarily by Professor Sybill Trelawney and her prophecies, plays an intriguing and significant role. Although many characters in the magical world doubt the legitimacy of Divination, the Oracle serves as a constant reminder that the future is uncertain and sometimes unpredictable. Trelawney's predictions, including the famous prophecy about the final battle between Harry Potter and Lord Voldemort, profoundly impact the narrative, driving the characters' actions and shaping events throughout the saga. Therefore, the Oracle adds mysterious and enigmatic elements to the story and highlights the importance of choices and free will, even in a world filled with magic and seemingly predetermined destiny.

5 THE ORACLE IN HARRY POTTER

Throughout the Potterian saga, the oracular function is of utmost importance. The art of Divination in Harry Potter is depicted as magical and complex and, most often, inaccurate. Sybill Trelawney is the Divination professor at the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, known for her vague and enigmatic predictions, which are frequently not taken seriously by students and even fellow teachers, except for Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts. Despite her eccentric appearance and dubious forecasts, Trelawney occasionally makes true predictions that significantly impact the plot.

One of the most pivotal moments involving the oracle occurs when Trelawney prophesies the birth of Harry Potter and his role in defeating Voldemort. The prophecy is made in his third year at Hogwarts, during a crucial moment that ultimately defines the destinies of Harry and Voldemort. Dumbledore, who hears the prophecy, takes steps to protect Harry, knowing he is the "Boy Who Lived" and has a crucial role in the battle against the dark forces.

Trelawney's first prophecy was made during her interview for the position of Divination professor and concerns the birth of an individual with the power to defeat Voldemort. The prophecy, with its temporal references and the rivalry between protagonist Harry Potter and antagonist Voldemort, plays a central role in the story, guiding the plot and subsequent events.

Voldemort tried to kill you when you were a child because of a prophecy made shortly before your birth. He knew the prophecy had been made, though he did not know its contents. He set out to kill

you when you were still a baby, believing he was fulfilling the terms of the prophecy. (Rowling, 2003, p. 839)

[...]

'On a cold, wet night sixteen years ago, in a room above the Hog's Head Inn bar. I had gone there to see an applicant for the post of Divination teacher, though it was against my inclination to allow the subject of Divination to continue at all. The applicant, however, was the great-great-grand daughter of a very famous, very gifted Seer and I thought it common politeness to meet her. I was disappointed. It seemed to me that she had not a trace of the gift herself. I told her, courteously I hope, that I did not think she would be suitable for the post. I turned to leave.' (Rowling, 2003, p. 840)

[...]

But when Sybill Trelawney spoke, it was not in her usual ethereal, mystic voice, but in the harsh, hoarse tones Harry had heard her use once before:

'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies ... and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not ... and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives ... the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies ...' (Rowling, 2003, p. 841)

Harry learns about those crucial pieces of information in the prophecy only during his fifth year at Hogwarts in the book "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix." The revelation comes in a conversation with Albus Dumbledore, the school's headmaster, who explains Voldemort attempted to kill Harry as a baby because he believed the boy was the child mentioned in the prophecy, according to which someone with the power to defeat him would be born at the end of the seventh month. Voldemort obtained the information from the prophecy through Severus Snape, who overheard part of it without Dumbledore and Trelawney knowing. The revelation of the prophecy is a pivotal point in the plot, since it establishes Harry's destiny and his inevitable confrontation with Voldemort, laying the groundwork for the events that unfold throughout the book and film series.

The second prophecy, made during Harry Potter's third year at the school, predicts the return of a faithful servant to his master, helping him to rise again with greater power and malevolence. Although initially dismissed, the prediction becomes crucial to the plot as the story progresses.

"It will happen tonight."

Harry wheeled around. Professor Trelawney had gone rigid in her armchair; her eyes were unfocused and her mouth sagging.

"S — sorry?" said Harry.

But Professor Trelawney didn't seem to hear him. Her eyes started to roll. Harry sat there in panic. She looked as though she was about to have some sort of seizure. He hesitated, thinking of running to the hospital wing — and then Professor Trelawney spoke again, in the same harsh voice, quite unlike her own:

"The Dark Lord lies alone and friendless, abandoned by his followers. His servant has been chained these twelve years. Tonight, before midnight . . . the servant will break free and set out to rejoin his master. The Dark Lord will rise again with his servant's aid, greater and more terrible than ever he was. Tonight . . . before midnight . . . the servant . . . will set out . . . to rejoin . . . his master...."

Professor Trelawney's head fell forward onto her chest. She made a grunting sort of noise. Harry sat there, staring at her. Then, quite suddenly, Professor Trelawney's head snapped up again. "I'm so sorry, dear boy," she said dreamily, "the heat of the day, you know... I drifted off for a moment..." (Rowling, 1999, p. 324)

In that passage, Harry Potter becomes aware of important information from the prophecy made by the Divination teacher in a tense and unexpected scene during a lesson. The teacher, Professor Trelawney, suddenly goes into a trance and prophesies about the return of Voldemort, who is about to rise again with the help of his servant. Surprised and alarmed, Harry tries to interact with the professor, but she seems out of reach, absorbed in her prophetic vision. The scene illustrates the unpredictable and often frightening nature of prophecies in the magical world of Harry Potter. Such a revelatory moment marks a turning point in the plot, increasing the tension and setting the stage for future events that will shape the destiny of Harry and his friends.

6 SYBILL TRELAWNEY: THE POTTERIAN CASSANDRA

Sibila Trelawney¹² is a secondary character in the "Harry Potter" book series written by J.K. Rowling. She serves as a seer and the Divination teacher at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Although her presence in the series is not central, she plays a significant role at critical moments in the narrative and her oracular journey is particularly relevant, since she makes two notable predictions. The first, made during her job interview for the Divination post at Hogwarts in 1979, foretells the birth of a boy at the end of the seventh month who would have the power to vanquish Lord Voldemort. The second prophecy is made in Harry Potter's third year at Hogwarts and predicts the return of a faithful servant to his master, which occurred in 1994. Due to the involuntary nature of her visions, Trelawney does not remember either prophecy.

Sybill Trelawney is introduced in the third book of the series, "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban," when the subject of Divination is presented to the audience. She is known for her eccentric style and ability to make predictions, although the accuracy of such predictions is often questioned. Trelawney lives in seclusion in the North Tower of Hogwarts Castle to maintain her clairvoyance. This is how the character is presented in the story:

Harry's immediate impression was of a large, glittering insect. Professor Trelawney moved into the fire light, and they saw that she was very thin; her large glasses magnified her eyes to several times their natural size, and she was draped in a gauzy spangled shawl. Innumerable chains and beads hung around her spindly neck, and her arms and hands were encrusted with bangles and rings. (Rowling, 1999, p. 102)

[...]

'Welcome to Divination,' said Professor Trelawney, who had seated herself in a winged armchair in front of the fire. 'My name is Professor Trelawney. You may not have seen me before. I find that

¹² Sibyll was a relative of a 'Cassandra': "And you are a great-great-granddaughter of the celebrated Seer Cassandra Trelawney?"

"Yes," said Professor Trelawney, holding her head a little higher. (ROWLING, 2003, pp. 314).

More information about Sybill in Butler & Butler (2016, pp. 54-57).

descending too often into the hustle and bustle of the main school clouds my Inner Eye.' (Rowling, 1999, p.102-103)

She often predicts the death of Harry Potter in her classes; however, the predictions are dismissed by Hermione Granger, a skeptic regarding Divination: "Divination was his least favorite subject, apart from Potions. Professor Trelawney kept predicting Harry's death, which he found extremely annoying" (Rowling, 2000, p. 193). Moreover, it continues: "You know, I'm starting to think Hermione was right about her" — he jabbed his thumb toward the trapdoor overhead — "she's a right old fraud" (Rowling, 1999, p. 321).

Throughout the series, Sybill Trelawney makes several minor predictions, many of which are seen with skepticism by other characters, creating parallels with the figure of Trojan Cassandra. She enters trance states, akin to Apollo's Pythia, during great stress. Her predictions are often enigmatic and vague: "Except, of course, for that time at the end of last term, when she had made the prediction about Voldemort rising again... and Dumbledore himself had said that he thought that trance had been genuine, when Harry had described it to him..." (Rowling, 2000, p. 200).

In the sixth book of the series, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," Sybill Trelawney is dismissed by Dolores Umbridge, the High Inquisitor of Hogwarts. However, she is rehired by Albus Dumbledore, the school's headmaster, as an act of kindness, keeping the character in the story, although her role remains secondary.

Sybill briefly participates in the Battle of Hogwarts, during which she makes a true prophecy about Voldemort's death. Voldemort tries to kill her during the battle, but Harry Potter and his friends protect her, giving meaning to her prediction.

7 POTTERIAN PROPHECIES: CONFRONTING ANCIENT ORACLE THEORY

The Divination professor in the Harry Potter series plays an oracular role that resembles, in various aspects, the traditions of oracles in ancient Greek culture. While the magic at Hogwarts represents a more direct form of Divination than the methods used by ancient oracles, Sibyl Trelawney shares some key characteristics with those mythical figures.

Just as Greek oracles often delivered enigmatic and symbolic prophecies, Sibyl Trelawney's predictions are vague and open to diverse interpretations. Her visions are frequently presented in a mysterious manner, making them challenging to fully comprehend. This is similar to the example of the Oracle of Delphi's prophecy to the king of Lydia, which did not specify which kingdom would be victorious or defeated.

Sibyl Trelawney claims to be able to connect with the supernatural world and make predictions based on that connection. She believes her intuition is guided by magical and unknown forces, placing her in a position similar to that of the priests and priestesses who served as intermediaries between gods and mortals in Greek oracles. The same occurred with Apollo's Pythia, who would enter a trance induced by inhaling natural vapors emanating from the temple's rocks or by chewing laurel leaves, considered a form of communication with the divine. Upon

entering a trance, the Pythias would utter enigmatic responses to the visitors' questions, interpreted by the temple priests for national or foreign consultants seeking answers on various matters. Both Sibyl and the Pythias would enter a divine trance during the revelation of their prophecies, disconnecting from the mortal world and momentarily connecting with the divine, hearing and uttering what might be nebulous and incoherent to the human ear, but especially clear to the divine interpreter, akin to the Apollonian Sun.

Regarding seclusion, the Pythias did not live completely reclusive lives. Although they spent most of their time at Apollo's temple, the priestesses led lives dedicated to religious service and the practice of Divination at the temple. In contrast, Rowling's Sibyl prefers a reclusive life so that worldly agitation does not cloud her inner vision.

Rowling's prophetess had her predictions invalidated by her peers in the magical world, similarly to Cassandra, who was disbelieved by all Greeks and Trojans in the ancient world due to Apollo's curse. Characters in the Harry Potter series often approach Sibyl Trelawney's predictions skeptically (e.g., Hermione, who considers her a fraud). Some such as Professor McGonagall doubt the veracity of her abilities, whereas others, like Professor Dumbledore, regard her predictions as accurate.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The practice of Divination, whether in Greek mythology or in the magical world of Harry Potter, offers a fascinating lens through which the intersection between the divine and the human can be explored. The figures of oracles, such as the Pythia of Delphi, the Trojan Cassandra in Greek mythology, and Sibyl Trelawney in Harry Potter, highlight the complexity of divine predictions and the struggles faced by the intermediaries who attempt to communicate truths about the future.

In Greek mythology, oracles were considered messengers of the gods, interpreting divine signs and symbols towards guiding mortals. However, such messages could have been more enigmatic and ambiguous, leaving room for human interpretation, which is inherently flawed and limited due to its mortal nature.

Professor Sibyl Trelawney embodies this duality of Divination in the literary universe, specifically in Harry Potter. Her predictions, sometimes imprecise and often disregarded, have profound implications for Harry Potter's destiny and the fight against Voldemort. Like the oracles of Greek mythology, Sibyl Trelawney faces the challenge of communicating important truths that may be ignored or underestimated.

The Potterian prophetess performs the oracular function that echoes, in some aspects, the traditions of ancient Greek oracles (e.g., her divinatory trance state and her being frequently discredited by her wizarding peers). Her enigmatic predictions and central role in the saga's narrative make her a fascinating figure reminiscent of Apollo's Pythias, the mysterious oracles of antiquity.

Interestingly, despite the similarities, the magic in the Harry Potter universe reimagines the methods used by ancient oracles. Sibyl Trelawney is a witch with fictional magical abilities, whereas

Greek oracles were often considered human intermediaries between gods and mortals without intrinsic magical powers.

In the magical world of Harry Potter, prophecies and the art of Divination play a crucial and often dark role. Through the enigmatic words of Professor Sibyl Trelawney, the fates of Harry Potter and Voldemort are intertwined mysteriously and profoundly. The magical seer, with her nebulous predictions, occasionally reveals unsettling truths. It was through one such prophecy that Harry discovered why Voldemort tried to kill him as a baby, a revelation that laid groundwork for the unfolding of the entire saga. Later, in a frightening class session, Sibyl predicted the imminent return of the series' antagonist, alerting Harry and his friends to the approaching darkness. Those prophecies are not merely vague premonitions, but powerful catalysts, shaping the course of the story in unexpected and thrilling ways. Therefore, the world of Harry Potter is permeated by a sense of inevitability and mystery, where the future is often darkly foreshadowed, leaving the characters and readers in constant suspense.

In conclusion, both contexts highlight the complexity of divine predictions, raising questions about free will, destiny, and human nature. Whether in mythology, or in contemporary fiction, divination continues to intrigue, questioning our understanding of time, influence of gods, or change in our lives. By exploring those narratives, we are invited to contemplate the future, the human condition itself, and our ongoing quest for meaning and understanding of the cosmos.

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