

# HYBRIDITY, THIRD SPACES AND IDENTITIES IN URSULA LE GUIN'S VOICES

**Fiona Covarr**

Department of English  
University of Pretoria  
Pretoria, South Africa  
fcovarr@yahoo.co.uk

## ABSTRACT

This article explores ideas of identity in relation to a young adult fantasy novel, *Voices* (2006), the second novel in Ursula Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series. *Voices* is set in a university city, Ansul, which has been invaded by the Aids. Nine-year old Memer Galva is an Ansul citizen who results from her mother being raped by an Aid soldier. She thus has a hybrid identity, since she is neither fully Ansulian nor Aid, and must learn to integrate with the Aids. Memer's identity is examined in relation to Bhabha's (1994) concept of hybridity and the third space in his postcolonial work. Hybridity is the adaptation of identity to an individual's social/political environment by either combining or rejecting elements of the cultures which constitute it. A third space is one occupied by an oppressed/colonised people which is neither central to their culture nor to their oppressors'/colonisers' culture, but which aids them to negotiate the two. By negotiating various 'spaces' in their respective environments, the Ansuls are able to 'hybridise' themselves, and ultimately 'outwit' or overcome the Aids. *Annals*

UNISA  university  
of south africa

Mousaion  
Volume 33 | Number 2 | 2015  
pp. 128–139

Print ISSN 0027-2639  
© Unisa Press

*of the Western Shore* is aimed at adolescent readers who occupy a 'hybrid' or liminal identity, being neither children nor adults. They must learn to adapt to and integrate with society as they become adults. Concepts of integration and identity are also relevant to South Africa, where there has been a need for hybridisation and movements into third spaces in order for its inhabitants to better adapt to the socio-political changes experienced in the country.

**Keywords:** hybridity, third space, identity, Ursula Le Guin, Homi Bhabha, adolescence, young adult literature, *Voices*, *Annals of the Western Shore*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Ursula Le Guin is a renowned fantasy and science fiction writer. Her *Annals of the Western Shore* (2004–2007) is a fantasy series aimed at young adults. The series explores the lives of a group of adolescents who each have a special power or magical gift and who are enslaved in some way. The narratives of each of the protagonists in the *Annals of the Western Shore* examine the realities of what it means to be enslaved by their power or by others, and how to best negotiate/navigate freedom. Le Guin highlights these concepts through the use of the motifs of slavery or of being enslaved throughout the trilogy.

Little research has been carried out on the *Annals of the Western Shore* to date although Clarke (2010) briefly explores some of the issues found in the trilogy in her book, *Ursula K. Le Guin's journey to post-feminism*. Even though Clarke (2010, 160) does mention that Le Guin's *Voices* (2006) 'makes a plea for cultural relativity' and claims that 'cultures can abide, by subversion if necessary, despite totalitarian attempts to end them', her main focus is on how Le Guin's stance on feminism has changed over the years. She does not examine the hybridity or third spaces of the novel in relation to identity as this study does.

In *Voices* (2006), the second novel in the trilogy, Le Guin utilises the setting of an invaded and enslaved city, Ansul, to highlight ways in which liberation from oppression can be attained. By showing how slavery or enslavement imposes an identity on the enslaved, Le Guin demonstrates how the characters lack the freedom to explore other possible identities for themselves. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that these characters are young adults and have had little opportunity to explore their identities outside the environment in which they are growing up. They thus tend to display little perception and/or self-knowledge due to their relative immaturity and lack of experience, and this significantly affects their identities.

## 2. HYBRIDITY AND THIRD SPACES

Bhabha's postcolonial theories of hybridity and the third space explored in his work *The location of culture* (1994), show how identity formation is based on concepts and

affirmations of Otherness. The notion of the Other has also been greatly elaborated on in the works of another postcolonialist theorist, Said, in his work *Orientalism* (1978), in which the Other is seen as anybody either culturally or racially different from those of the West. Bhabha (1994, 2) utilises this idea of Otherness, along with his own concept of hybridity, to highlight the process undergone by the colonised in their identity formation. According to Bhabha (1994, 19), hybridity is 'a difference "within" a subject that inhabits the rim of an "in-between" reality'. This difference to which Bhabha is referring is a cultural identity which is created by the colonised when they come into contact with the coloniser's culture. It is an identity which is not original to either the colonised's or the coloniser's culture, but which bridges the two:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood ... that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (Bhabha 1994, 19)

Here, Bhabha is suggesting that this act of hybridity is a means of identity creation, and is powerful enough to reshape societies. The concept of hybridisation is also relevant for adolescent readers because it is how 'newness enters the world' (Bhabha 1994, 227). Adolescents, inhabiting a space in which they are no longer children but not yet fully adults, need to become more adaptive and innovative as they mature, and so this idea of newness is one that can be seen as appealing and advantageous for them. This concept is important in understanding some of the characters' positions in *Voices*.

Bhabha's (1994, 2) concept of an 'in-between' space, what he calls the 'third space', is also central to his overall theory of culture and identity. Bhabha (1994, 2) refers to this third space in terms of 'interstices': 'It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of ... cultural value are negotiated. How ... subjects [are] formed "in-between"'.

Bhabha (1994) therefore states that culture automatically implies difference, what he refers to as 'domains of difference', but theorises that what is important is that there is an overlap between cultures, that is, something they have in common. It is the way difference and commonality are negotiated by the colonised which allows for such an 'in-between space'. This space enables the colonised to create a hybrid identity which incorporates aspects of both the central culture and their own marginal culture. By negotiating various 'spaces' in their respective environments, and in either accepting or rejecting certain cultural values and differences, the colonised are able to 'hybridise' themselves, that is, take on various cultural aspects

of their environments. Thus, they become more adaptive and empowered, and so they are ultimately able to 'outwit' their oppressors.

Bhabha's third space can also be likened to Wilkie-Stibbs's (2006) concept of 'borderland children'. These characters are children who inhabit the border between the norm and the different because they embody ambivalence and do not always conform to the expected norms of childhood, be it, for example, because they have been adopted, have step-parents or are missing a parent for whatever reason. Thus, they inhabit a borderland or liminal space. This can be related to the concept of adolescence as a liminal state, in which adolescents are no longer children but not yet adults. The idea of liminality or inhabiting a third space is linked to hybridity because it concerns itself with an 'in-between' identity. South African readers are precisely in the sort of liminal position Bhabha describes in terms of a third space. A sociopolitical background influenced by colonisation, apartheid, and the advent of democracy, has meant that South Africans have had to develop hybrid identities and inhabit third spaces in order to adapt to and integrate with their changing political environment. Ideas of postcolonial transformation and crises of identity are also explored in *The Empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literatures* (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffins 1989). However, this article will focus mainly on Bhabha's theories of hybridity and the third space, since these concepts are central to *Voices*. The article is based on a close reading of the novel, and will focus on Bhabha's theories and their relation to identity formation in particular. It will demonstrate how these theories can lead to the creation of a new identity and also suggest how these concepts may be relevant to adolescent readers.

### 3. MEMER GALVA

*Voices* is set in the southern city of Ansul, a city famed for being a centre of knowledge, with a great university and library. However, an invasion by an illiterate desert people, the Alds, and the 17-year-long siege which follows it, puts an end to this. The Alds see books and writing as evil, the works of demons and the Other Lord. The Alds have invaded Ansul on the pretext of destroying the Other Lord. The Alds have thus invaded homes, destroyed books, destroyed people suspected of harbouring books, and emptied the famous library that once took pride of place in the city. The 9-year old protagonist, Memer Galva, is the result of her mother being raped by an Ald soldier. So although she considers herself a citizen of Ansul, she has Ald blood in her. From the beginning of the novel, Memer's strong sense of hatred towards the invading Alds is apparent when she openly admits: 'I swear that I will always hate the Alds, and I will drive them out of Ansul, and kill them all if I can' (Le Guin 2006, 12).

Memer's anger towards the Alds seems to stem partly from losing her mother at a young age, but more importantly from the fact that she is biologically neither fully

a Galva, nor fully an Ald. It is this sense of a hybrid identity, an 'in-betweenness', which seems to cause Memer to feel such resentment towards the Alds. At times, Memer will use the language of the oppressor and sarcastically refer to herself as 'the half-breed' (Le Guin 2006, 318), which further reveals her frustration with her identity. She is essentially utilising what Bhabha (1994, 3) refers to as a 'sign of racialized violence' which is also a 'symptom of social victimage'. Memer sees herself as 'victimized' by way of her race, and cannot truly escape her oppressors since she will always be genetically tied to them.

Memer is raised in the House of Galvamand, also known as the House of the Oracle, because in times past, citizens would come there to receive messages from an ancient power, called the Oracle. Due to the Ald invasion, however, all talk of the Oracle is forbidden and knowledge of it kept secret. Memer's relative, the Waylord Sulter Galver, secretly teaches her to read in a hidden chamber of which only Memer and the Waylord know (and which, later on, turns out to be the chamber of the Oracle). The chamber must be kept secret because it harbours many books, the sacred yet forbidden objects which must be safeguarded at all costs and kept hidden from the invading Ald army. The books are sacred because they form a link to the cultural history of the citizens of Ansul, a history which is threatened to be wiped out by the Alds.

Memer has always gravitated towards the hidden books in the secret room, but has, for a long time, been frightened of some of the books kept there, which she knows have something supernatural about them – books which groan to her, bleed and prophesy. Although Memer cannot understand this at first, these are signs that she will become the channel for the voice of the Oracle. However, she also suspects that her fear of the secret chamber might be because the Alds' opinion of it may be correct. This makes her somewhat paranoid and she feels the need to reason her fear away:

Wasn't the secret room the one place where I was free of fear? I wanted it to be only that. I didn't understand my fear and didn't want to know what it was. It was too much like what the Alds called devilry and evil spirits and black magic. Those were nothing but ignorant, hateful words for what they didn't understand – our gods, our books, our ways. (Le Guin 2006, 30–31)

It is clear that Memer still harbours uncertainty and fear with regard to the supernatural power housed in Galvamand. She tries to overcome this through a process of questioning in order to convince herself that the Alds are wrong. However, the power of the oppressor's discourse seems to be hard to resist and can be seen in Memer's attitude to her hybrid identity and its meaning with regard to her becoming the voice of the Oracle later on:

What I finally said [to the Waylord] took me by surprise. I said, '*Are there demons?*'

When he did not answer, I went on, the words bursting out of me hoarse and unclear, 'You say I'm a Galva, but I'm not – not only – I'm both – neither. How can I inherit this? I never even knew about it. How can I do something like this? How can I take this power, when I'm afraid – afraid of demons – the Alds' demons – because I'm an Ald too!' (Le Guin 2006, 182)

The displacement and fear Memer feels here can be likened to what Bhabha (1994, 13) refers to as 'unhomeliness'; this is where

domestic space[s] become sites for history's most intricate invasions, ... where the borders between home and world become confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is ... disorientating.

Memer feels disorientated with regard to the chamber, because she fears that perhaps the Alds' discourse about it harbouring demons may be true, especially for her since she is 'an Ald too'. Memer's emotional outburst could also suggest that perhaps she recognises and has learnt to accept her hybridity since she admits she is also an Ald. However, it is also clear that Memer has succumbed to the fear generated from the Alds' religious discourse regarding the blasphemous powers of Ansul, and of the House of Galvamand in particular.

Bhabha (1994, 70) also points out that '[t]he objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types ... in order to justify conquest'. By promoting ideas of blasphemy and degeneration with regard to Ansul's religious practices, the Alds are better able to control the citizens out of fear. Moreover, '[t]he construction of the colonial subject in discourse ... demands an articulation of forms of difference – racial and sexual ... [and is] crucial to the binding of a range of...discriminations that inform ... racial and cultural hierarchization' (Bhabha 1994, 67). In order to create a power hierarchy, the Alds must emphasise racial and sexual 'forms of difference' and this is apparent in the way they discriminate against the people of Ansul, and against women in particular. The Ald soldiers have besieged the city for over 17 years, during which they have been mostly deprived of the company of women. They do not allow female citizens freedom and enslave those who dare 'whore' themselves openly by being in the streets. Memer has thus never known any freedom. And so, in order to survive in this occupied society in which she finds herself, Memer must always go about disguised as a young boy. The influence of the Alds' discourse is further demonstrated in Memer's interactions with the adolescent Ald boy, Simme, who attempts to befriend her (in her disguise as 'Mem' the 'groom-boy'). He asks her if she knows any girls and she quietly thinks to herself: 'My heart went up into my throat. All I could think was that he'd seen I was a girl, that he'd start shouting about pollution, defilement, [and] blasphemy' (Le Guin 2006, 135–136). This shows that Memer, and the citizens of Ansul, must work to overcome the psychological damage inflicted on them via the Alds' discourse.

Whenever she talks of the Alds, Memer voices her negative impression of them; for example, she complains about the behaviour of 'street-gang boys', and says

that they '[act] like filthy Alds', and she describes how she '[tries] not to cringe' whenever she passes by Ald guards (Le Guin 2006, 37). When Memer is given the opportunity to attend a poetry recital at the Ald leader's tent, she immediately reacts by thinking: 'I wanted to protest, to say I refused to go anywhere near the Alds, I didn't want to learn anything from them or about them ... The idea was more frightening the more I thought about it' (Le Guin 2006, 119). According to Bhabha (1994, 3), '[t]erms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively'. Memer's refusal to 'engage culturally' with the Alds in any way is a sign that she rejects their culture. By submitting to this type of mindset, Memer is ironically perpetuating the same 'racialized violence' by which she feels victimised. Although she does eventually agree to go along to the recital, she still feels fear and contempt for the Alds.

#### 4. GRY AND MEMER'S HYBRIDITY

The successful overthrow of the Alds in Ansul is strongly linked to the power of story, and Orrec the protagonist from *Gifts* (Le Guin 2004), the first novel in the trilogy, plays a central role with regard to this in *Voices*. As fate would have it, Memer stumbles into the path of Orrec and his wife, Gry (also from *Gifts*), who are visiting the city because they have been invited to Ansul by Gand Iorath, the aging leader of the Alds in Ansul. Orrec travels as a well-known poet and storyteller, a 'Maker', and Gry accompanies him with her pet half-lion, Shetar. Both their magical gifts have allowed them to travel and to spread knowledge of poetry and ideas of freedom. In Ansul, Orrec and Gry are openly treated as 'foreigners' by the Alds, and so they inhabit a liminal space whilst staying there since they are neither Alds nor citizens of Ansul.

Bhabha's idea of hybridity can be seen with regard to how both Gry and Memer outwit the Alds in disguising themselves as males. As mentioned, the Alds are ignorant when it comes to their preconceptions about women. They do not revere women, who are treated as second class citizens to be owned, and so they leave their Ald women behind in the deserts to keep them hidden and under control. Whenever Gry accompanies Orrec on his visits to Gand Iorath, she can only safely do so in the guise of a man. Gry's argument is that she will be safe precisely because of the Alds' ignorance of women: "'All unbelievers look alike [to them]. And the Alds don't see women, anyhow'" (Le Guin 2006, 95). Gry insists she is sure they will not discover her identity because 'they won't see, they can't see' (Le Guin 2006, 96). This shows the Alds' closed-mindedness and it is this prejudiced ignorance that holds the Alds back, and prevents them from taking part in society in a healthy and productive way. According to Hoogvelt (in Meredith 1998, 1) hybridity is 'celebrated and privileged

as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference'. By dressing up as males, both Memer and Gry are easily able to 'outwit' the Alds due to the latter's egotistical ignorance about women. The Alds, in fact, adopt a typical chauvinistic/colonialist mindset, which makes Memer and Gry's deception even more ironic – they are the ones who are demonstrating 'superior' intelligence in being able to manipulate the Alds 'at their own game'.

This concept of a 'superior intelligence' is also demonstrated by Memer when she recounts the cook, Ista's, words to her about her outings to the marketplace:

Ista was always afraid [her own daughter] would meet soldiers and be taken and raped if she went out alone. She wasn't afraid for me. The Alds wouldn't look at me, she said. She meant they wouldn't like my pale bony face and sheep hair like theirs, because they wanted Ansul girls with round brown cheeks and black sleek hair ... 'You're lucky to look the way you do,' she always told me ... So grannies and children, many of them 'siege brats', half-breeds like me, the girls dressed as boys, did most of the shopping and bargaining in the markets. (Le Guin 2006, 23)

Memer is able to evade detection out in the market place because she has adapted to Ald expectations. The fact that others in the city do the same shows that hybridity can be an advantageous strategy for survival among the oppressed.

According to Lesko and Talburt (2012, 253), in youth studies, hybridity is seen as 'a form of subversion and resistance'. Gry's undermining of male Alds in her travels to their homelands is a perfect example of subversion, and she admits this to Memer openly: "I liked them well enough. I couldn't get to know any women, though, because I was pretending to be a man and had to keep away from them" (Le Guin 2006, 117–118). Memer and Gry dressing as males might appeal to adolescent readers in particular, as it shows their dynamism and this can be viewed as empowering. Moreover, it shows their rebellious natures in refusing to be typecast by the Alds' limited expectations of females and so they evade being discriminated against. This relates to Lesko and Talburt's (Willis in Lesko and Talburt [1990] 2012, 253) idea that "the creative, dynamic nature of youth culture" means that young people are a particularly seductive population to attach to the vanguard of hybridity'. Memer and Gry essentially undergo a process of 'recreating' an identity for themselves which allows them some modicum of freedom of movement. This idea of recreating an identity is relevant to adolescents who frequently (but not always) undergo identity crises which ultimately function to allow them to 'discover' or 'remake' who they are in the world, a process which, according to Bhabha (1994, 37), is dynamic and inventive: 'In the hybrid space of youth culture, forms, practices, identities, and meanings are "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew"'. This also allows for their liberation from identities which may be imposed on them from external sources.



## 5. FANON'S CULTURAL PRESENCE

The idea of rebellion in association with adolescence can also be applied to the psychoanalytical theory of cultural empowerment posited by Fanon (in Bhabha 1994, 12):

I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity [i.e. my cultural presence] insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world – that is a world of reciprocal recognitions.

I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence.

In the world in which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom.

Although Fanon is specifically referring to the migrant traveller here and the upset his cultural presence induces in the Metropolitan centre, these ideas can be transferred to adolescence, and more specifically, adolescent rebellion. In the first part of his quote, Fanon refers to the idea of a negating activity that is his very presence or rather identity as Other. Adolescents can also be seen as Other to adults. The idea of doing battle and refusing to apologise for being 'present' can be likened to the act of rebellion in order to bring about something that is valued by the rebelling party – in this case, the desire to be recognised, and to bestow recognition in turn. And this is also perhaps where the adolescent's desire to exert power in the world can be considered as well. The second part of Fanon's quote, in which he considers the idea of 'introducing invention into existence' is exactly what Bhabha (1994) has in mind when he talks about hybridity introducing 'newness' into the world. Adolescents are generally viewed as being creative in developing their identities, whether it be through the expression of alternative clothing, hairstyles, or music, for example. Fanon goes on to explore the idea of creativity once again (here specifically through travel), and then he concludes by stating that people must move past history (and its imposed/limiting ideas) in order to move into freedom. Fanon refuses to confine his identity to a historical hypothesis which merely Others him and relegates him to the periphery of society.

As Bhabha (1994, 12) points out in connection with Fanon's quote and its relevance to hybridity and the third space, 'it is the space of intervention emerging in the cultural interstices that introduces creative invention into existence. And [where] ... there is a return to the performance of identity as ... the re-creation of the self in the world'. This, it could be argued, is what adolescents are doing when they decide to empower themselves through rebellion against authority figures, just as Gry and Memer do when disguised as males – they are trying to create an identity which allows them to express whoever/whatever they may want/need to be at a given point

in time. However, as Trites (2000, 47) points out, it is virtually impossible to fully escape socially determined roles and identities:

[R]ace, gender, and class create another type of defining institution in adolescent literature: identity politics. These concepts serve as institutions because the [behaviours] of large numbers of people are regulated in terms of identity politics ... Even the rebellions of those who reject gender roles are at least partially determined by a societally shared concept of the institutions of femininity and masculinity.

Memer realises that she can only have a chance at some freedom of movement if she adheres to the Alds' concepts of gender expectations.

The citizens of Ansul have been put in a difficult situation, not only because they are obviously oppressed by the invading Alds, but also because they have to cooperate with them on some level in order to survive. And so it becomes necessary to examine Ghandi's (1998, 138) idea of a "contaminated" victor ... [with] an analysis of the victim as a sometimes-collaborator, sometimes-competitor, with the oppressive system'. This postcolonial idea is illuminating with regard to the Alds and the effect their presence has on the citizens of Ansul. The Ald-slave woman, Tirio, a former upstanding citizen of Ansul, who becomes the Gand's concubine, finds herself in this victim/collaborator/competitor position shortly after the citizens of Ansul overthrow the Alds:

Tirio herself played a peculiarly difficult part – once slave-concubine to the tyrant, now wife of the legate – victim of the enemy yet his conqueror. There were people in Ansul who still called her whore and shameless, and more who adored her, calling her Lady Freedom. She bore it all with steady mildness, as if there were no such thing as a divided loyalty. Most people ended up believing her to be nothing more than an ill-used, well-bred, sweet-natured woman making the best of her strange fortune. She was that, but she was more. (Le Guin 2006, 352–353)

Tirio inhabits a third space, just as Memer does, and attempts to use this position to the benefit of both the Alds and the people of Ansul. She embodies the openness required to establish peace between the two factions. In order to free each other from oppression, both parties have to be willing to accept the presence and future citizenship of the other. Ansul's position can be likened to a 'postmodern condition':

The wider significance of the postmodern condition lies in the awareness that the epistemological 'limits' of those ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices – women, the colonized, [and] minority groups ... For the demography of the new internationalism is the history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of ... communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political ... refugees. It is in this sense that the boundary becomes the place from which *something begins its presencing* in a movement not dissimilar to the ambulant, ambivalent articulation of the beyond. (Bhabha 1994, 7)

Here, Bhabha advocates that postmodern societies need to embrace multicultural diversity, and move into a mindset that goes beyond the limited viewpoints created by the Metropolitan centre, that is, they need to move into a third space. This is exactly what the citizens of Ansul, and the invading Alds, must do if they are to succeed at a cooperative 'internationalism'. They must begin a new '*presencing*' by embracing diversity and becoming a more tolerant society. The concept of accepting cultural difference and embracing diversity by moving into a third space is also relevant to post-apartheid South African adolescent readers. South Africa's political history can be likened to the situation in which Ansul finds itself with the Alds – a position which requires active negotiation and a willing cooperation to acknowledge, tolerate, and embrace a future inclusive of all identities and cultures.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The identity transformation undergone by Memer in *Voices* is essentially her journey towards freedom. Only in being able to recreate an identity for herself in the present, through enlarging her perception of others, acquiring more worldly knowledge (through the act of reading and the power of story), and through accepting her cultural hybridity, is she able to move into a new identity. This process can be related to Bhabha's (1994, 10) idea of the 'work of culture':

The borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

This process of moving forwards and living in the moment, by acknowledging the past and its influence yet embracing the present and its challenges, is important because it means that Memer becomes more open to accepting the Alds (and thus cultural difference) and working towards a peaceful and cooperative co-existence with them. Memer's power as the channel for the Oracle also becomes something she finally accepts. Adolescent readers may be able to see Memer's journey towards creating a new identity (and thus moving towards freedom) as something they could undertake for themselves in their own lives.

## REFERENCES

- Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin. 1989. *The Empire writes back: Theory and practice in post-colonial literature*. London: Routledge.
- Bhabha, H. K. 1994. *The location of culture*. London: Routledge.

- Clarke, A. M. 2010. *Ursula K. Le Guin's journey to post-feminism*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.
- Ghandi, L. 1998. *Postcolonial theory: A critical introduction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Le Guin, U. K. 2004. *Gifts*. New York: Harcourt.
- Le Guin, U. K. 2006. *Voices*. London: Orion Children's Books.
- Le Guin, U. K. 2007. *Powers*. London: Orion Children's Books.
- Lesko, N. and S. Talburt, eds. 2012. *Keywords in youth studies: Tracing affects, movements, knowledges*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Meredith, P. 1998. Hybridity in the third space: Rethinking bi-cultural politics in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Unpublished conference paper, Massey University, Albany. <http://www.lianz.waikato.ac.nz/PAPERS/paul/hybridity> (accessed July 16, 2013).
- Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Trites, R. S. 2000. *Disturbing the universe: Power and repression in adolescent literature*. Iowa, IA: University of Iowa Press.
- Wilkie-Stibbs, C. 2006. Borderland children: Reflections on narratives of abjection. *The Lion and the Unicorn* 30(3): 316–336.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**FIONA COVARR** has recently completed her MA in adolescent fantasy literature at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her MA focuses on notions of rebellion, enslavement and identity in Ursula Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore*. Her interests lie in children's literature, Medieval literature, the Arthurian romance, 19th century literature, classical mythology, fantasy and science fiction. She also completed a mini-dissertation on Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* for her honours degree. She currently lectures on a variety of literary genres for an English undergraduate course, ranging from 16th century poetry, William Shakespeare, 18th century/Augustan poetry, Romantic poetry, Charles Dickens, South African poetry and short stories, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Joseph Conrad and Modern poetry.