Freedom, rebellion and adolescent identity in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore*

by

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

Magister Artium

in the

Department of English

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

SUPERVISOR: Professor Molly Brown

April 2015

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Molly Brown for her invaluable support and assistance in this dissertation. It would not have been possible without her steadfast guidance.

I would like to thank my mother, Caroline, for her belief in me and her encouragement and patience over the years of my academic studies. I will always be eternally grateful to her for making this journey possible.

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on Ursula K. Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* (2004-2007) series. Ursula Le Guin is a renowned fantasy and science fiction writer, and has won numerous awards for her work. The series is a fantasy trilogy for young adults (YA)[1], which explores the lives of a group of adolescents living in vastly different regions of the fictional Western Shore. It explores their struggle to come to terms with their supernatural powers or magical gifts, and how this struggle affects the formation of their identity. The protagonists all feel enslaved by their gifts in some way, and they have to learn to rebel against this enslavement in order to free themselves from the identity it imposes on them.

The value of this dissertation lies in the fact that to date not much research has been carried out on Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series. Moreover, it is of central concern to this dissertation to question Roberta Seelinger Trites's (2000) theory on adolescent rebellion, in which she believes that successful protagonists in young adult fiction must always embrace and work with the societal institutions against which they initially rebel, or face a sure demise. This dissertation shows how Le Guin's series defies the limits of this theory, since none of the rebelling protagonists fit into this formula. In fact, it is through their rebellion that they are able to create a new identity for themselves, and move forwards towards emancipation. This study thus calls into question the nature of 'acceptable' adolescent rebellion in young adult novels.

This dissertation also explores ideas relating to the concepts of freedom and enslavement. One of these is Michel Foucault's (1980) theories on power/knowledge, and the role these

[1] The term 'young adult' refers to a human being usually between 14 and 21 years of age. A 'child' refers to a pre-pubescent human being, whilst an 'adolescent' is a human being who has entered puberty and is generally between ages 12 to 19.

play in identity formation. Foucault believes that knowledge is power, and it is through expanding one's knowledge of the world and the self that one can exert more power in the world. This is something the adolescent protagonists in the *Western Shore* must discover for themselves. Another idea I explore is the potential of the story as a means to self-emancipation. Here I look at theories based on narrative therapy, bibliotherapy, and poetry therapy. The stories and texts the protagonists are exposed to in the novels help them to re-story their own lives, and recreate their identities. I also look briefly at issues of gender in slavery, examining Le Guin's anti-essentialist feminist theory in relation to her Taoist beliefs of balance, and show how slavery differs for each of the genders. Gender identity determines the roles the protagonists are expected to fulfil by the authority figures in their lives.

The idea of rebellion and its relevance to evolutionary psychology is examined in relation to observations made by the young adult/fantasy critic Allison Waller. I show that I agree with Waller's (2009:190) theory that adolescent rebellion is a necessary part of evolution in humankind and that it enabled us to take risks and to become successful hunters and gatherers. Similarly, this dissertation argues that if fictional protagonists do not rebel and rise up against authority figures, they do not develop a more mature view of the world. This dissertation also explores how fantasy differs from other kinds of literature and considers the relevance of fantasy literature as a genre for adolescents. Although the *Western Shore* is set in a fantasy world, the issues the protagonists have to deal with, such as challenging parental, educative, state, and even colonial authority, are real-world issues. As Le Guin (1979:39-45) suggests, fantasy, although seen as escapist, examines the real world and real issues, making it a vital genre for adolescents to read.

Key Terms

Ursula K. Le Guin, *Annals of the Western Shore, Gifts, Voices, Powers,* Young Adult literature, Fantasy, Enslavement, Rebellion, Roberta Seelinger Trites, Michel Foucault.

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Chapter 1 – Freedom and Rebellion:

An Introduction to Le Guin and Fantasy for Adolescents

> Only the imagination can get us out of the bind of the eternal present,...leading us to the freedom that is properly human, the freedom open to those whose minds can accept unreality. (Le Guin [1980] 1989:45)

In her book, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000), Roberta Seelinger Trites examines the construction of adolescent identity by working closely with Michel Foucault's theories on power. Trites (2000:3) is particularly interested in showing how adolescent protagonists must 'learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function, including family, school, the church, government, social constructions of sexuality, gender, race, class, and cultural mores surrounding death'. Moreover, Trites (2000:47) sees identity politics as a type of institution in itself, which functions to 'regulate' the 'behaviours' of the masses. The characteristics of these behaviours are either consciously chosen by individuals or are 'imposed on them' by others (Trites 2000:47). Trites (2000:x) believes that it is ultimately the negotiation of the power these institutions impose on adolescents, as well as their experimentation with their own power within these power structures, which will lead adolescents to develop in a way that allows them to become functioning and productive members of society: 'They must learn to balance their power with their parents' power and with the power of the other authority figures in their lives'.

One way of testing these power relations is through the act of rebellion, which is often associated with adolescence. Rebellion is thus another means to identity formation, since it shows what is acceptable or unacceptable to adolescents in terms of their own identity and in

terms of the way society perceives them. Trites (2000:34) also posits a theory about rebellion in which she argues that successful protagonists in young adult fiction must always ultimately embrace and work with the societal institutions against which they initially rebel, or face a sure demise. This dissertation examines Trites's theory and attempts to demonstrate how Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series defies Trites's assumptions about 'acceptable' adolescent rebellion in young adult fiction.

In this dissertation, I also explore the genre of young adult fantasy literature, and the relevance it may hold for identity formation in adolescent readers. Firstly, I provide an outline of Le Guin's background and of her *Annals of the Western Shore* series, a fantasy trilogy for young adults which explores the lives of adolescents living in vastly different regions of the fictional Western Shore. Secondly, I look at how fantasy literature differs from other kinds of literature and consider the relevance for adolescents of fantasy as a genre based on the work of contemporary critics such as Alison Waller (2009), Maria Nikolajeva (1996) and Rosemary Jackson (1981). I then go on to explore ideas relating to the concepts of freedom and enslavement, especially with regard to identity formation. Here, I focus on Julia Kristeva's (1982) theory of abjection, Homi Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial theories of hybridity and the Third Space, and Michel Foucault's (1980, 1982) theories of power and discourse. I will also explore the importance of the role played by narrative and stories in each protagonist's emancipation. Thirdly, I link the concepts mentioned above to Trites's theory of rebellion and identity formation, and show the relevance these have for adolescent readers.

Ursula Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series, which consists of *Gifts* (2004b), *Voices* (2006), and *Powers* (2007), is a fantasy series aimed at young adults. It explores the idea of the responsibility which comes with power and focuses on ideas of freedom and choice. The

trilogy explores the lives of adolescents who are all enslaved in some way, and who grow up in diverse social contexts. What makes these protagonists different from the norm is that each of them has a special power or magical gift. The idea of a special power or magical gift is common in the genre of fantasy fiction, especially in young adult fantasy. Elkind (cited in Waller 2009:58) has suggested that the idea of being special or unique may be relevant for adolescent readers, since adolescents are prone to egocentrism and see themselves as actors to an 'imaginary audience' whilst they are in the process of creating their own 'personal fable'.

The concept of enslavement is evident in each of the *Western Shore* novels. In *Gifts* (2004b), Orrec, a boy from a powerful family, is enslaved by his apparent gift of destruction ('the Unmaking') because he is expected to take over the family duty of protecting the domain (farmland) where he and his family live from invaders. In this way, he is made to feel trapped by the expectations placed on him. In *Voices* (2006), Memer, a girl living in an occupied city, feels fear, denial and revulsion in connection with the voice of an Oracle that speaks through her, and at the thought of integrating with and helping the invading desert people, the Alds. Finally, in *Powers* (2007), Gavir, who has been taken from his own people as a young child, is subject to physical slavery in the prestigious House of Arcamand in the city of Etra. Moreover, he must keep his magical power (the power of foresight) a secret as its revelation would be dangerous. It is these various forms of enslavement and the processes which the protagonists have to undergo in order to free themselves, along with the relevance these concepts may hold for adolescent readers reading fantasy fiction, which are examined in this dissertation.

For readers who are familiar with Ursula Le Guin's work, the radical affirmation of the need for rebellion in the *Western Shore* trilogy is not surprising. Le Guin is a renowned American

fantasy and science fiction author. Her father, Alfred L. Kroeber, a pioneering anthropologist, and her mother, Theodora Kroeber, an author and folklorist, seem to have passed their interest in cultures and sociology on to their daughter; certainly evidence of this can be seen in Le Guin's works. Le Guin's first science fiction novels were published in the 1960s amidst what became known as the New Wave movement in science fiction. During this time there was a general movement of rebellion amongst Western youth reacting against the beliefs of their parents and the state. This movement saw the emergence of subversive forms of music and art, drug culture, hippie culture and anti-Vietnam protests (Bernardo & Murphy 2006:16). This movement was also reflected in a New Wave of science fiction, and involved a transition in which the genre moved away from the so-called 'hard' sciences in order to focus more on the 'soft' social sciences (Bernardo & Murphy 2006:16). This movement stemmed from the article 'They Come From Inner Space' by J.B. Priestley (1953,. Priestley examines the idea of an 'inner space', a concept which is about 'moving inward, exploring ourselves, [and] the hidden life of the psyche' (1953, cited in Littlewood & Stockwell 1994:127). This is what happens to the protagonists in the *Western Shores*. They undergo an exploration of their own 'inner spaces' or 'hidden psyches' in order to understand who they are in the world.

Le Guin's first three novels, *Rocannon's World* (1966a), *Planet of Exile* (1966b), and *City of Illusions* (1967), form part of what is referred to as Le Guin's Hainish Cycle, a series of texts which explore the idea of an ancient space-faring race, the Hains, who, it seems, populated various planets with different species as part of a genetic experiment. The Hainish Cycle novels span aeons. The modern descendants of the original Hainish culture form the Ekumen (a sort of Interplanetary League), which has emerged as a space-faring body whose goal is to unite the various planets under the League, spreading and sharing their technological knowledge with fellow members. Le Guin's other novels in the Hainish cycle are *The Left*

Hand of Darkness (1969), which explores gender concepts via the presence of an androgynous race, *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974a), which examines ideas of anarchy, socialism and capitalism, *The Word for World is Forest* (1976), which looks at issues of ecology, social domination and capitalism, and *The Telling* (2000), which explores the damage wrought on two different planets by extremist ideologies and their need to obtain a spiritual and social balance in their societies. The Hainish Cycle is also represented in some of Le Guin's other works, such as her short story collection *Four Ways to Forgiveness* (1997), and the short stories 'The Day Before the Revolution' ([1974] 1975), 'Coming of Age in Karhide' ([1995] 2003), and 'A Fisherman of the Inland Sea' (1994a). The similarity between the works mentioned above and the *Western Shores* is that they all involve in-depth world building. This is an art at which Le Guin excels, and the setting of her worlds greatly affect the stories she tells. It is the conservative or oppressed societies in which the protagonists of the *Western Shore* find themselves that they must rebel against.

Three Le Guin science fiction novels do not fall into the Hainish Cycle. The first, *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971), deals with the story of George Orr, a man who is able to manifest his dreams. George is ordered by the state to undergo psychiatric treatment with the power-hungry Dr William Haber, who, on discovering Orr's ability and on realising its potential, manipulates George's dreams for his own gain. Although Haber initially intends to improve the world through manipulating George's dreams, the outcome of this intervention leads to a disharmony in the world. The second novel, *The Eye of the Heron* (1983), looks at Victoria, a planet newly colonised by humans from Earth. The two main colonies on the planet are at odds with each other. One colony makes up the notorious Victoria City, originally a penal colony, and the other, Shantih Town, is made up of political exiles from Earth who marched in protest against the wars there, brought on by the ruling government of the time. The novel

examines how both colonies struggle to work towards reconciliation so that they can live in harmony with one another. At the end of the novel, some disillusioned Shantih Town citizens decide to leave the town and embark on a perilous journey to start a new colony in the North. The third novel, *Always Coming Home* (1985), is more anthropological in its examination of the way of life of the fictional Kesh people, a Native American tribe. The Kesh live in the catastrophe-struck Valley of the Na, an American landscape which has successfully survived a major flood. The three novels thus all explore the concept of striving towards balance, a Taoist concept central to Le Guin's thinking, which is explored more fully below in relation to her fantasy works. It is partly the presence of this motif that ensured that Le Guin's brand of science fiction stood out in the 1960s as different from the simple oppositional dichotomies typically expected from science fiction writers at the time. As Bernardo and Murphy (2006:16) point out, Le Guin's own 'anthropological interests' result in 'tales of loss, companionship, isolation, redemption, and love', and it is these concepts that can be found in the *Western Shore* trilogy.

Just like her science fiction, Le Guin's fantasy, which is strongly youth-oriented, explores the concept of balance. This idea stems from Le Guin's following of Taoism, a Chinese wisdom-based spirituality which advocates that all aspects of life (especially aspects of dualism or binary opposition) need to be considered as being in balance with one another – so, for example, light balances with dark, good balances with evil, and male balances with female. It is when these aspects are out of balance that there is discord in the world. This concept is particularly evident in one of her most famous fantasy works to date, *The Earthsea Trilogy* (1974b). The trilogy consists of *The Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1970)

and *The Farthest Shore* (1972)[2]. In the three novels, Ged, the wizard protagonist, must learn to navigate Earthsea, a waterbound world of magic, and undertake various journeys so that balance/harmony is brought to the land.

In the first novel, *The Wizard of Earthsea*, the young Ged must learn to temper his ego in relation to his magical abilities, and he must undergo a perilous journey to escape (and then later on to chase down) an evil shadow he has released into the world because of a dangerous spell he casts as a result of his over-reaching egoism. In finally hunting down his evil shadow self and wrestling with it, Ged and the shadow become one, and order is restored to Earthsea. This is a symbolic union in which Le Guin demonstrates the necessity for balance in the world. The concept of imbalance is also explored in the *Western Shore*, whether it is due to the abuse of magical powers, the tyrannical rule of a besieged city, the physical enslavement of people, or the exclusion of women from certain societies due to gender bias and discriminatory beliefs.

In *The Tombs of Atuan*, the focus is initially on a female protagonist, Tenar (or Arha), who is indoctrinated into an all-female religion which worships chthonic gods. Tenar's role as the high priestess of the cult is to navigate and protect the underground maze-like caverns in which the ancient gods/Old Powers are said to reside. However, this life of isolation is shown to be one of sterility. It is only when Ged comes to the Kargish lands in search of the second half of the bracelet of Erreth-Akbe that he comes into contact with Tenar, and slowly reveals to her that she is not trapped in her situation, and can choose a path to freedom if she so desires. This ultimately happens, and results in Tenar's fleeing the cult and the underground maze (which collapses in on itself), and her travelling to Havnor with Ged in order to embark

[2] These three novels were originally published separately, but later on were published as a complete volume called the *Earthsea Trilogy* (1974)

on a new life for herself. The concept of isolation and its resultant social sterility is explored in the *Western Shore* in relation to the alienated Upland societies in *Gifts* (2004b), the superstitious and illiterate Alds from the desert lands in *Voices* (2006), and the ex-slave forest communities in *Powers* (2007). This type of isolation is always counterproductive and does not benefit these societies in any way.

The final novel of the original trilogy, *The Farthest Shore*, follows the tale of Prince Arren, who, as a young adult, chooses to accompany Ged on a quest to find out what has caused Earthsea to become imbalanced, since magic no longer seems to function correctly, madness is becoming commonplace, communities are disintegrating, and dragons are losing their ability to speak. Their adventure takes them to the Dry Land, the land of the dead, which Ged and Arren must cross in order to restore balance to Earthsea. In order to do this, they must confront the crazed Cob, a wizard who has cast a spell in order to become immortal. The spell goes awry since he can only exist in this state in the barren Dry Land. Ged must stop Cob and mend the imbalance he has brought to Earthsea, but in his efforts to do so, he loses his own powers of magic. Just like the *Western Shore* novels, *The Farthest Shore* is a *Bildungsroman* in terms of Arren's development into maturity before becoming the future King Lebannen of Earthsea. It is only because of Arren's support in the land of the dead that Ged is able to survive and accomplish his quest. Once again, the Taoist idea of balance in nature, specifically in life and death, is explored in the novel.

In 1990, Le Guin added a fourth novel, *Tehanu*, to the trilogy, to some protest by die-hard Earthsea fans, and the trilogy was renamed the *The Earthsea Quartet* (1993b). The main argument against the addition was that its main focus was no longer the quests of the all-powerful protagonist Ged, but on Tenar (from *The Tombs of Atuan*), on her adoptive daughter,

the abused and badly-burned Therru, and on the idea of 'women's work'. The novel thus focuses more on feminist aspects and the experience of women living in Earthsea. As Le Guin points out in her pamphlet *Earthsea Revisioned* (1993a:5), the first three novels focused on 'the hero tale' which is 'concerned with the establishment or validation of manhood'. They thus fed into the traditional masculinist view of what a hero-tale should be. Le Guin (1993a:7) admits that at that point she 'was writing partly by the rules, as an artificial man, and partly against the rules, as an inadvertent revolutionary'. She conformed to the hero-tales by focusing her stories on a male protagonist in the hero role, but went against them by making him dark-skinned/non-white. But even this gesture, Le Guin (1993a:11) admits, was not revolutionary enough as she gradually awakened to feminism in the mid-seventies. And so, she explains, that as a 'serious writer' she could not 'go on pretending to be genderless' and that she 'couldn't continue [her] hero-tale until [she] had, as a woman, wrestled with the angels of the feminist consciousness' (Le Guin 1993a:11). And so in the fourth novel, she purposefully set out to right this situation by focusing on a female hero and her daily struggles to survive in the male-dominated world of Earthsea. However, Le Guin (1993a:24) came to realise that this upset many readers, who criticized the novel:

> Oh, they say, what a shame, Le Guin has politicized her delightful fantasy world, Earthsea will never be the same.
> I'll say it won't. The politics were there all along, the hidden politics of the hero-tale, the spell you don't know you're living under till you cast it off.

Despite the risk that she might alienate her traditionalist readership, Le Guin went ahead with overturning the conventional fantasy world she created in the first three novels with the addition of *Tehanu*.

Two other short stories follow on from *Tehanu*, which also explore feminist perspectives. The first of these is 'Dragonfly' ([1997] 2001), a story about a young girl who is half human and half dragon and who wishes to go to Roke in order to learn the proper ways of magic, training

in which is usually reserved exclusively for males. The second story is ‘The Finder’ (2001), in which the protagonist, Otter, must learn to use his magic responsibly for the greater good, firstly in working with females to overcome slavery, and secondly, on his quest to enrol young talent (male and female alike) into magical training at the school of Roke.

A final novel to be added to the *Earthsea* series by Le Guin is *The Other Wind* (2001c), which sees the development of Lebannen in his role as the King of Havnor, and of the scarred Therru, who has matured into her identity as a half human, half dragon. It too explores ideas of balance, especially in relation to life and death, and in cultural interaction with regard to the differences between the original races of Earthsea, the Hardic race, the Kargish race, and the Dragons. By adding the last four works to the original trilogy of *Earthsea*, Le Guin subverts the typical expected fantasy quest, and rather chooses to explore female heroism and coming of age in Earthsea in order to examine Taoist beliefs of balance. As Amy Clarke (2010:4) states, in her *Earthsea* additions, Le Guin ‘entirely remakes the male-dominant paradigm that underpins them, creating a world of unlimited possibility regardless of gender’. And, as demonstrated, Le Guin is clearly not afraid to revisit well-established worlds created in the past in order to question accepted paradigms. As readers, we can always ‘expect to find Le Guin’s impeccable sense of detail, her deft characterisation, and her ear for the perfectly tuned endnote’ (Clarke 2010:165). Over the years, Le Guin has also published numerous short story collections, poetry, critical essays, as well children’s books. It is thus through her art that Le Guin is able to present a polemic to modern society, since the bulk of her work aims at ‘making sense of the world, [and] helping us all find [a] middle ground of flexible resistance’ (Clarke 2010:165), and this is nowhere more apparent than in the *Western Shore* trilogy.

The ideas of slavery and freedom, which are prominent in the *Western Shore* trilogy, have previously been explored by Le Guin in part of her Hainish Cycle stories, in particular in the four stories making up the collection *Four Ways to Forgiveness* (1997), and in a later short story, 'Old Music and the Slave Women' (1999), from her collection *The Birthday of the World* (2003). In these five stories, which are set on two planets, Werel and Yeowe (Werel's former slave colony), the concepts of slavery and freedom are explored from varying viewpoints, ranging from those of oppressed slaves, freed slaves, overthrown slave-owners, to those of tyrannical military regimes and diplomatic Ekumenical envoys. According to Clarke (2010:129), this is a postmodernist approach that Le Guin adopts with regard to the truth of a situation, thereby demonstrating that there is no single truth, only a multitude of experiences which can be collated to attempt a construction of a 'truth'. Just as these varying viewpoints make up the story that encompasses the realities of slavery and freedom, so too the narratives of the protagonists in the *Western Shore* examine the realities of what it means to hold power over others, to be enslaved, or how to best negotiate/navigate freedom. However, it is through the protagonists' own master narratives that their stories are relayed. And so the idea of story is thus pivoted as being central to the trilogy as well. This idea is also examined later on in this dissertation.

Another important aspect to be considered in this dissertation is the identity of the adolescent and the relevance of this identity in literature as a whole. Waller (2009:6) argues that adolescents should be recognised in their own right in the sphere of children's literature since they have issues and problems which are quite different from children's concerns. Thus the idea of adolescent identity should take precedence in fiction directed at young adults. Waller (2009:14) insists that a unique 'critical methology' is required for young adult literature because of its 'in-between-ness or liminality'. Because of the liminal nature of adolescence

itself, it is not surprising that Waller highlights this phenomenon in adolescent literature. The adolescent novel is thus situated 'in an uneasy position as neither children's storybook nor adult literary novel', and 'is not necessarily read exclusively within its intended readership of adolescents who move between the literary worlds of children's literature and adult texts' (Waller 2009:33). This idea of liminality can also be seen in fantasy literature, which is often 'linked to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse' (Turner (1969), quoted in Waller 2009:33). Some of these liminal states can be seen in Le Guin's trilogy, and are embodied in the situations the protagonists find themselves in, as discussed later on. It is this liminality, a belonging yet also a not-belonging, which makes young adult fiction unique, and may go some way toward explaining its appeal for Le Guin, who is attracted to the potentials inherent in liminal states.

Fantasy can be seen as an empowering form of literature. In much fantastic literature, protagonists are given special powers or magical abilities as part of the secondary world which they inhabit. These powers set the protagonists apart from the rest of the characters in the story. Waller (2009:100-101) believes that '[i]f adolescents are empowered through a sense of special status [by the fact of being an adolescent] or through resistance to existing social or familial structures, then fantasy motifs fittingly represent adolescent power' since 'pleasures are found in exerting power or in evading or opposing it'. Waller (2009:195) goes on to suggest that in creating and exploring metaphorical power structures, the fantastic can encourage the questioning of experience in the real world. The idea of the burden of responsibility however, is also highlighted by Waller (2009:100-101) when she states that fantasy can '[play] a part in weakening teenage characters, ultimately figuring fantasy abilities or gifts as elements that alienate them from the normalised world of teen realism and that act as a burden of social responsibility'. This is precisely the case in Le Guin's trilogy, in

which the protagonists initially struggle to deal with their powers or the consequences of their use, mostly because of the social responsibility or stigma tied to possessing such powers. However, it could be argued that even this initial struggle can still be seen as ultimately empowering since it is constructive in its didacticism for readers. As Karen Coats (2010:81) points out, the message to be learned in fantasy in which the heroes are singled out or alienated and carry the burden of being 'saviour' is not the fact that they are 'special', but rather that 'they are responsible and must act'.

According to the author Susan Cooper (1981, quoted in Nikolajeva 1996:69-70), '[f]antasy is the metaphor through which we discover ourselves'. Fantasy operates in a psychological way, using metaphorical concepts to dynamically explore reality. Nikolajeva (1996:72) supports this idea by explaining that fantasy fiction functions as realistic fiction does, but in a more innovative way, through exploring the psychological aspects 'behind the adventure'; in so doing, 'fantasy can treat the same questions as the best realistic stories'. And so, ironically, fantasy is just another mode whereby the real can be examined.

This concept of the link between fantasy and reality is further supported by Rosemary Jackson in her critical work *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981). Jackson (1981:20) believes that although fantasy subverts the real, by 're-combin[ing] and invert[ing]' it, it cannot fully escape the world of reality since it requires a basis in reality in order to explore real problems, even though it is the real world which fantasy finds 'so frustratingly finite'. Jackson (1982:34) does not view fantasy as purely escapist (and she criticizes critics who do so) but sees it as a particular type of narrative in its own right. By acting as a 'mirror' to the real world, it examines the problem of the real world but in a fantastical setting, and thereby allows readers to question the nature of the world in which we live (Jackson 1982:43-45).

However, Jackson (1982:20) does acknowledge that fantasy is also one way in which the reader can escape the frustrating limitations of the real world.

This idea of escapism has come to be seen as the basis of fantasy, but as Le Guin (1979b:42) argues in her essay ‘Why are Americans Afraid of Dragons’, fantasy deals with the real world, as opposed to realist literature, which deals with ‘fake realism’, and which she feels ‘is the escapist literature of our time’. For Le Guin (1979b:42), fantasy ‘isn’t factual, but it is true...[and] its truth challenges, even threatens all that is false,...phony, unnecessary, and trivial in [the lives people] have let themselves be forced into living’, and this is why they are afraid of it. Fantasy frees the mind and challenges the ethics and limiting beliefs of the real world. Jackson’s idea of frustration due to the limitation of the real world could also be linked to the idea of the frustrated adolescent, who wishes to rebel against the limitations imposed on him/her by authority figures. And it is this desire for rebellion which can also be found in the dual escapist/realist nature of fantasy fiction.

Fantasy, by its very nature escapist, experimental, imaginative, and subversive, is an alternative literary genre. Fantasy appeals to the solipsistic desires of its readers, allowing them to imagine themselves as performing the most crucial role in the resolution of a quest (Waller 2009:62). Therefore, it is an effective literary form for adolescent readers because it does not limit them to the real world in the same way that teen realism does, but rather enables readers ‘to project themselves into a narrative that better suits their egocentric needs’ (Carlsen (1971), cited in Waller 2009:62). It could thus be argued that fantasy is an empowering form of literature in its exploration of the use of power.

Moreover, fantasy highlights the oppressive discourses and systems operating in the real

world, and in so doing, it ‘challenges the accepted norms of reality, [which can then] be resisted’ (Waller 2009:100). So, for example, Le Guin’s trilogy examines the issue of enslavement and the process the protagonists go through in order to rebel against it and to move forwards into a position with which they are happy. This idea of being enslaved by an oppressive system or authority could be applied to the lives of adolescents, who are subject to a myriad of dominant discourses, as well as to institutional and parental authority. But the trilogy does not just describe a simple rebellion against an oppressor. Rather it examines the notion of a balance between rebellion and the consequent responsibility which arises due to the actions taken. It focuses on the process and outcomes of rebellion, and explores how the protagonists must deal with these aspects. The core idea that emerges from Le Guin’s trilogy is that, contrary to what Trites believes, rebellion can be constructive in aiding characters to move into a new, more conducive, self-chosen identity.

In *The Annals of the Western Shore* series, Le Guin demonstrates how the protagonists must use power in a productive way in order to escape enslavement. This is not just a matter of the protagonists escaping enslavement. It is also a matter of their exploring or negotiating power relations. Foucault’s (1980) concept of power, especially mass military power (a form of what he calls ‘disciplinary power’) is relevant with regard to slavery and complicity: ‘Foucault describes these...mass forms of training bodies, gestures and behaviours as a “political anatomy” aimed at producing “docile bodies” whose economic and social usefulness [can] be maximised’ (O’Farrell 2005:103). For Foucault, docility and usefulness are intrinsically linked – only a docile body can be the most productive of the system of disciplinary power that he describes. Le Guin’s use of slavery as a motif is effective because it shows this process of the subjection of human beings to disciplinary power causing them to become ‘docile’ or complicit, and how their ‘usefulness’ is harnessed in various ways.

Moreover, slavery can be viewed as a relevant concept in terms of childhood or adolescence. Kimberly Reynolds (2011:116) points out in her discussion on the ethics of power that there is a history of literature written about slavery, especially in the eighteenth century, which was aimed at children, who were perceived as slaves or servants themselves (having little power against authority figures). This meant that most child readers could relate to the oppression of slavery. As a result, many Abolitionist texts were geared towards child readers. This implies that Le Guin's trilogy may be relevant for young adult readers since they should be able to relate to the notions of power that it explores. Trites (2000:79), in line with Foucault, argues that 'power can be both repressive and enabling; it is from within the confines of powerlessness that people rebel and discover their own power'. This is the case with the protagonists in the *Annals of the Western Shore* – it is only when they rebel against their circumstances of powerlessness or learn to negotiate within the power structures in which they find themselves that they come into their own power.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault sees freedom as being 'implicated' in history. He sees the regulation of human behaviour as resulting from 'historical constraints' (May 2011:76). Foucault sees history as a series of random yet interconnected events that have brought about the various systems of power in place today. So it is a 'historical contingent' that has brought about our behaviour in this point in time. Hence, 'there is no reason to believe that, if we understand our historical legacy, we cannot change it' (May 2011:77). This point is relevant to *Gifts*, *Voices* and *Powers*, in which history is the factor that determines status and power. However, in the novels, history is either something the characters are forced to keep hidden, or is not deemed important at all and so is neglected. The fact that history remains blurred, or is positioned as the unknown, explains why the societies in Le Guin's

trilogy are steeped in certain destructive systems or behaviours. Perhaps if the protagonists and their communities had a fuller awareness or understanding of their history and their relative location in it, then, based on Foucault's notion of history, they would 'have a chance at changing it' (May 2011:77). The idea of story and its central role to history is also relevant here. It is only through the 'historical' and personal stories of characters or of by-gone heroes that the various cultures in the trilogy come to acknowledge their cultural heritage, and to realize their roles as citizens in a certain place and time.

Foucault (1982:781) also explores three types of power struggles necessary for the expression of freedom, which can be applied to Le Guin's trilogy. The first struggle is against 'ethnic, social, and religious' domination (Foucault 1982:781), which is relevant to *Voices* and the Ald invasion of the city of Ansul. This is particularly evident in the Alds' destruction of the library of Ansul, in the curbing of the citizens' religious freedom of expression, and of their movement in the city itself. The second struggle is 'against forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce (Foucault 1982:781), aspects of which can be seen in slavery in general, and is thus relevant to slavery as a whole in *Powers*. Although the slaves of the House of Arcamand are described as being 'well-clothed and fed', this is only in comparison to slaves in the other Houses of Etra, and it is likely that the slaves would be separated from 'what they produce'. The slaves who are not in this position, for example, Everra as a teacher to the slave children and to the Family children, are a rarity. A good example of 'separation' from 'produce' can also be applied to the slave women of the house, whose babies are always sold on to another house, not only for financial gain, but also so that the risk of their attachment and loyalty to blood relatives are lowered. In this way, control over the slaves is maintained. Foucault's third struggle is 'against subjection' and 'forms of submission', essentially 'that which ties the individual to himself and submits him to others in this way' (Foucault 1982:781), which can be seen in *Gifts*. Orrec's decision to blindfold

himself out of fear that he may hurt his family due to his uncontrollable power, and out of obedience to his father's wholehearted consent to this precaution, can be seen as a form of submission to his own perceived identity as the son of Canoc with the 'wild gift', and to his father as a paternal authority. Thus all three of Foucault's notions about power struggles are relevant to Le Guin's trilogy. They function to show up the different types of struggle the protagonists must go through in order to free themselves of oppression and/or subjection.

Foucault (1979, cited in May 2011:79) sees freedom as a matter of experimentation, which allows a subject to experience 'possible transformations'. Being free allows us to experiment with identity; but in order to do this, we do need to have 'some knowledge' (May 2011:80) of how we have come to be who we are. We also have to be prepared to live in uncertainty:

> The issue for one interested in one's freedom, then, is not the metaphysical question of who one is and where one's freedom lies, but rather the question of where one's particular history has deposited one, and how that history might be intervened upon. For Foucault, in short, situated freedom is a historical and political concept rather than a metaphysical one (May 2011:83).

This argument is relevant to each of the protagonists in the *Annals of the Western Shore* series. All of them find themselves 'deposited' in a certain social context which is historical and political in nature. For Orrec, his family domain history and the use of their power to defend themselves lead to pressure on him to fulfil the role that his father currently holds as protector of Caspromant. For Memer, it is the Ald invasion which has led her city to be held captive, and to her never knowing her city as it was prior to the invasion. For Gavir and his sister Sallo, a long history of slavery in Etra has meant that they were kidnapped as children and sold into the slave trade, which is seen as a socially acceptable system, and which goes unquestioned by many, mainly because it is based on tradition. Once these protagonists come to know their 'histories', they have more knowledge about how to move forward from their position of subjection or oppression. In doing so, they can experiment with a different identity, one which entails less restriction and a more positive move towards liberty.

As already mentioned, another important concept to be explored in *The Annals of the Western Shore* in relation to power, freedom, and the movement into a new identity, is the role of the story. A variety of theories on narrative therapy, bibliotherapy and poetry therapy, which focus mainly on Judith Milner and Patrick O'Byrne's *Brief Counselling: Narratives and Solutions* (2002), Hugh Crago's 'Healing Texts: Bibliotherapy and Psychology' (Hunt 2005), Nicholas Mazza's *Poetry Theory: Therapy and Practice* (2003), and Barbara Harlow's *Resistance Literature* (1987), are also applied to the notion of the story and the role it plays in emancipation in the novels. Narrative therapists believe that the therapeutic use of the story, especially the story of 'the self', can help people 're-story' their own lives, enabling them to overcome the dominant discourses within which they feel trapped (especially with regard to their identity). Bibliotherapists believe that the prescription of selected literature can help people externalise their problems, and in so doing, overcome them. In the novels, the protagonists use the process of reading, writing and poetry to help them re-story their lives, specifically in relation to the historical and political contexts in which they find themselves. In this way, they are able to move into or experiment with, new identities. As discussed in the article 'Truth and Story in Ursula K. Le Guin's Short Fiction and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission' by Deirdre Byrne (2000), this idea of story is especially relevant to the South African context in relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created shortly after the advent of democracy in 1994. The idea behind the Commission was to allow people to share the story of their experiences during the Apartheid in order to share their truth with others, and to allow themselves a chance at reconciliation with former oppressors or victims. Similarly, the use of story thus functions in the *Western Shore* novels to suggest, rather than to impose, a way out of enslavement, as I show in this dissertation.

This dissertation thus aims to examine enslavement, power, knowledge, rebellion, freedom,

history and story, and the role these play in relation to positive identity formation for the protagonists in Le Guin's trilogy. The way in which the protagonists go about creating these new identities is also examined in terms of insights derived from a range of other theorists.

In Chapter 2, Orrec's identity formation is explored by applying Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection as set out in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Abjection, the physical or psychological repulsion felt towards various manifestations of the physical or psychological world (for example, a corpse, or vomit) allows people to re-affirm their identity, initially by rejecting notions of that which repels them, but then ultimately moving into a new paradigm through overcoming this abjection. In the overcoming of abjection, there is a positive movement towards freedom.

In Chapter 3, Memer's identity is examined in relation to Homi Bhabha's concept of the Third Space and Hybridity in his postcolonial work *The Location of Culture* (1994). By negotiating various 'spaces' in their respective environments, the protagonists are able to 'hybridize' themselves, that is, take on various cultural aspects of their environments, and thus become more adaptive, and ultimately, able to 'outwit' or overcome their oppressors.

In Chapter 4, Gavir's identity formation is explored focusing on Foucault's (1980) theories on Power and Knowledge, and on various narrative therapy and bibliotherapy theories on the 're-storying' of identity, which have already been briefly highlighted and summarised in this chapter.

In Chapter 5, I demonstrate that the *Western Shore* novels run counter to Trites's theory that fictional adolescent rebellion can only be of a certain type (namely 'acceptable') if it is to

have a productive outcome for the protagonists. I show how the idea of rebellion is a necessary one, by relating it to the observations by the fantasy critic Allison Waller (2009) that adolescent rebellion is necessary for the psychological evolution of humankind, and that its repression has led to many social disorders in our society. Thus, Trite's concept of an 'acceptable' rebellion that leads to a reintegration with the original authority/system rebelled against, or else facing a sure demise, is not always applicable to young adult novels. In the *Western Shore* trilogy, it is the protagonists' rebellion which frees them from enslavement, allows them to make their own choices in life, and to become more proactive and successful.

Chapter 2 – Lifting the Blindfold:

Self-knowledge, Power, and Abjection in *Gifts*

> If I could not learn to use my power, I could learn how not to use it. That was what I willed to do, because only so could my will act. Only in this bondage could I have any freedom. (*Gifts* 2004b:133)

Knowledge, especially in terms of perception and self-knowledge, plays an important role in Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series. Le Guin highlights this concept through the use of the motifs of slavery or of being enslaved throughout the trilogy. 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. This limits their perception and/or self-knowledge, both of which are significant in identity formation. Rebellion is also a means to identity formation, since it shows what is acceptable or unacceptable to the adolescent in terms of both self-perception and societal perception. Trites (2000) posits that successful protagonists in young adult fiction must always ultimately embrace and work with the societal institutions against which they initially rebel, or face a sure demise. This chapter briefly examines how Le Guin's *Gifts* (2004b) defies Trites's assumptions about adolescent rebellion in young adult fiction. It also demonstrates that obtaining freedom from enslavement is an important concept in identity formation. The problem most of the protagonists in Le Guin's series face is that they are initially unable to separate reality from appearances and so they remain powerless and enslaved in some way, until they rebel and come to realize the truth of their situations, and thus the truth about their own natures and powers.

The Annals of the Western Shore commences with *Gifts* (Le Guin 2004b), in which the protagonist, 12-year old Orrec Caspro, struggles to attain his 'true gift', a supernatural power passed on from generation to generation. The gift allows members of certain families to exert a form of supernatural control over their external environment. Orrec is meant to inherit his father's gift for 'unmaking' but it becomes clear as time goes by that his gift is not immediately apparent. The gifts of each of the families of the Uplands, the hilly, rural farmlands in the north of the Western Shore, help them to maintain power over their lands, called 'domains', and protect them from potential invaders. These gifts range from things like 'twisting', 'calling [animals]', 'blinding', 'deafening', 'taking speech away', 'the gift of the knife', 'the gift of the rein and broom' (enslavement through magical possession) and 'cleansing'. Not every member of the family inherits the gift, only those who are of the true line do. Orrec's father, Canoc Caspro, has the gift very strongly and it is expected that Orrec will have the same ability when he comes of age, despite the fact this mother, Melle Aulitta, is a Lowlander.

Orrec's childhood friend, Gry, has also inherited her mother's gift of 'the calling' which enables her to summon wild animals at will. This gift benefits hunting parties or can be used to control livestock - breaking in horses, for example. Gry, however, is reluctant to use her gift as she feels empathy with the animals she calls. Thus she chooses not to use her gift for hunting purposes, a choice much disapproved of by her family as this gift is an important source of income for them. Gry has a theory that the gifts are not being used the way they were initially intended. It is her opinion that the gifts were originally meant to heal and protect others, not to harm them or to be used as weapons:

> "I wonder if all the gifts are backward....Maybe they were useful for curing people, to begin with. For healing. And then people found out they could be weapons and began to use them that way, and forgot the other way". (Le Guin 2004b:230)

The origin or source of the gifts is unknown, and this also accounts for Gry's questioning of their original use. What is known is that they are simply passed down through the family line. Unfortunately, however, great power corrupts greatly. We see this in the misuse and abuse of the gift by the Caspro's neighbouring domain leader (or 'Brantor'), Erroy Gere, who uses his power to physically harm those in his service or those of whom he disapproves. The danger of these powers means that neighbouring domains generally try not to get too involved with one another, and an uneasy and cautious isolation of sorts sets in.

It is significant that Gry does not believe in damaging the community through the use of destructive gifts nor in damaging the natural world. These ideas are also touched on in Le Guin's science fiction novel *The Word for World is Forest* (1976), in which a heavily forested planet, Ashthe, is colonized by space-faring humans, who proceed to destroy the environment through their plundering of its natural resources. The novel examines the impact this destructive attitude has on both the colonizers and the indigenous humanoid inhabitants of the planet, who subsequently become colonized and enslaved. The idea of balance in nature and the environment can be related to Le Guin's belief in Taoism, which advocates balance in all things, especially in binary oppositions (so, for example, good is balanced with evil, and light is balanced with darkness). This is critical if harmony is to be attained in the world. This idea of harmony with nature is also what eco-critics such as Jonathan Bate (2000:1) see as central to humankind's development: 'The point is to learn from nature, to enter into its spirit, and to stop trying to impose upon it the arbitrary constraints which results from our belief in our own importance.' Gry's beliefs are thus significant because they show that 'beyond the opposition of mind and matter, subject and object, thinker and thing, there is the possibility to 'realise' nature' (Bate 2000:1). In this way, we can avoid seeing ourselves as separate from

nature (Bate 2000:1). This message of preservation and respect for both the social and natural environment is then passed on to adolescent readers of *Gifts*.

Essentially Orrec is enslaved by his 'gift' in that his father generates the expectation that it will develop strongly in him and that he will take on the responsibility this entails as Brantor of Caspromant one day. Later on, Orrec is further enslaved by the belief that he has 'the wild gift', the use of the gift but no control of it. Orrec is convinced of this idea by Canoc and he then has to struggle with the idea that he has no option but to protect others from his unruly powers. It is Canoc who insists that Orrec be blindfolded because the gift is exerted by 'the seeing eyes'. Orrec's gift thus defines his identity to the world and dictates how he is perceived, and what his expected role in life is. His father continuously struggles under the burden of responsibility which the gift has imposed on him, knowing that he is the only one who can truly protect his family's domain. The pressure of this becomes greater because a powerful, greedy, and dangerous acquaintance from Canoc's past, Brantor Ogge of Drummant, is now their new neighbour:

> Now Ogge was our neighbour. From that time on my father's temper took a turn towards darkness. He felt that we, all the people of his domain, were at risk, and that we had only him to defend us. His sense of responsibility was strong, perhaps exaggerated. To him, privilege was obligation; command was service; power, the gift itself, entailed a heavy loss of freedom. If he had been a young man without wife or child, I think he might have mounted a foray against Drummant, running all the risks at once, staking himself on one free act but he was a householder, a burdened man, full of the cares of managing a poor estate and looking after its people, with a defenseless wife and no kinsman of his gift to stand with him, except, perhaps, his son. There was the screw that tightened his anxiety. His son of thirteen years old now and still had shown no sign of his gift. (Le Guin 2004b:72)

So the gifts, ironically, are great burdens in themselves because of the sense of expectation, duty, and responsibility which comes with them. The fact that Orrec, at age thirteen, has still not shown any signs of having the gift, places even more pressure on Canoc. Another factor which Orrec's gift will determine is his future marriage to the neighbouring Drummant's

granddaughter, which will ensure the strength of the future lineage and possibly ease the tense relations between the two domains. It is for this reason that his father presses him into the potential arranged marriage: '"But this girl at Drummant is of our line, Orrec. That's a matter of very great weight to me, to you, to our people. It's a chance we cannot throw away. Drum is our neighbour now, and kinship is a way to friendship"' (Le Guin 2004b:90). Orrec thus has to overcome these impositions of expectation and duty in order to discover his true gift, for storymaking and poetry. It is significant the Latin term *poesis* refers to the idea of poetry and making, and this idea is what Orrec must learn to embrace – that he is a 'maker'. He needs to be able to grow and to escape into the unknown world which he desires to explore. He also has to learn to stand up for Gry, whom he truly loves and longs to marry. Orrec thus has to learn to free himself from an imposed identity through self-knowledge. This concept of self-knowledge, and its role in helping Orrec create a new identity, is revealed through the narrative structure of the novel. It is Orrec's story which he is telling in hindsight that shows us he has grown and can now look back at his childhood and adolescence from a more mature viewpoint.

According to Jean Piaget (1968, quoted in Elkind 1970:4), reason is important in childhood and adolescence when it comes to forming a stable identity and in coming into a place of power: 'To discover such constancies [stability] the child must...learn to distinguish between reality and appearance, between how things look and how they really are.' Piaget suggests that distinguishing the difference between reality and appearance is a learning process, and is a vital stage in the development of reasoning, and in childhood maturation. This idea ties in with Rosemary Jackson's (1981:45-46) observation that a 'central thematic concern' in fantasy literature is 'problems of vision' which can in turn be related to the idea of a lack of knowledge or comprehension; that is, "I see' [is] synonymous with 'I understand". In this

way, knowledge and understanding 'are established through the power of the *look*, through the *eye*' (Jackson 1981:45-46). In other words, Piaget's theory of distinguishing between appearances and reality is similar to Jackson's idea that being able to truly see something means being able to understand it.

The ideas of seeing and perceiving in relation to psychological development and to forming an identity are especially relevant to Le Guin's trilogy. Vision and the eyes are prominent motifs which contribute to the ideas of perception and self-knowledge in *Gifts* (Le Guin 2004b). In the first chapter of the novel, when the runaway Lowlander, Emmon, is talking to Orrec and his friend Gry about the fabled supernatural gifts of the Uplands, he asks Orrec, who is blindfolded at this point, whether he was born blind (Le Guin 2004b:13). When Orrec explains that he is not truly blind, but that his father has simply 'sealed his eyes', Emmon is taken aback that Orrec's father could do this to him (Le Guin 2004b:14). And so the motif of vision is introduced right from the beginning of the novel. In the second chapter, Orrec's passing mention of 'Blind Caddard's Staff', a staff belonging to his notoriously powerful ancestor, functions as an ironic foreshadowing that Orrec will be blinded and will have to make use of his great-great-great grandfather's staff (Le Guin 2004b:16). The concepts of the eyes and their power of sight are strongly linked to the Caspro's supernatural gift of the 'Unmaking'. And so Orrec, reminiscing about when he was still a young boy being trained under his father Canoc, admits how he 'was afraid of his [father's] eyes then' (Le Guin 2004b:20). Orrec also reminisces about how Canoc used to tell him the story of Blind Caddard, whose gift was so strong and uncontrollable that his parents had to '"[tie] a bandage around the child's eyes for three years, so that he couldn't use the power of the eye"' during which time they trained him, and that '"[h]is reward for perfect obedience was to see again"' (Le Guin 2004b: 22).

According to Trites (2000:xi), in adolescent novels, institutions, or in this instance parental authority figures:

> ...both empower and repress adolescents in the ways that they create new opportunities for teenagers while they simultaneously establish rules within which the teenager must operate, [and in this way, they shape teenagers] into appropriate degrees of power within a culture.

The story of Blind Caddard and his blindfolding punishment, which is subsequently rewarded by the restoration of sight, is a way in which Canoc reaffirms the politics of identity and authority to Orrec. Canoc does this because these are pertinent to the survival of the Caspromant domain. Orrec is at first happy to comply with the authority Canoc exerts over him: 'Obeying [my father] was a difficult, intense pleasure. His satisfaction was my reward' (Le Guin 2004b:18). However, this outlook gradually changes as Orrec matures and becomes frightened by the burden of his gift, and so he refuses to submit to Canoc's request to show his gift at the Ashbrook hillside:

> I've said that obedience to my father had always been a pleasure to me....And it was a very deep habit, a lifelong, unbroken custom. I had simply never thought of disobeying him....I understood what he was asking of me now....But I would not do it. (Le Guin 2004b:105)

The only way Canoc can cajole Orrec into using his gift is by placing the burden of social responsibility upon him: '"You must show your gift, Orrec," he said. "If not to me, to others. It's not your choice to make. To have the power is to serve the power. You'll be Brantor of Caspromant. The people here will depend on you as they do on me now. You must show them they can rely on you"' (Le Guin 2004b:107). Through his use of a discourse of social expectation, Canoc is implying that the growing adolescent Orrec is expected to conform to the social constructs which make up his society so that he can become a constructive member in it.

Trites (2000:3) examines the construction of adolescent identity and is particularly interested

in showing how adolescent protagonists must ‘learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they must function, including family, school, the church, government, social constructions of sexuality, gender, race, class, and cultural mores surrounding death’. The adolescent protagonist is, in this way, forced to ‘see’ or confront the reality of social responsibility. Ironic foreshadowing also functions in Canoc’s recitation of the ancestral tale of Blind Caddard, since it is Orrec who will have to be blindfolded for three years so that he is unable to use the power of his eyes when it is thought he has the uncontrollable ‘wild gift’. It later turns out that this idea of his having the ‘wild gift’ is a psychological ploy by his father.

As the novel develops, Orrec’s blindness is held in contrast to Gry’s heightened clarity of vision and perception. Gry is thus shown to be mature in terms of listening to her intuition and believing in herself. One day, Orrec’s mother, Melle Aulitta, asks Gry if she can ‘talk’ to the mice in her storeroom for her and get them to move into the stables instead. Gry immediately sees a problem with this because the mice would then have to move ‘[their] babies’, and the cat in the stable would pose a problem for these – Gry’s mind ‘moved unpredictably; she saw as the mice saw, as the cat saw, as my mother saw, all at once...[and so] she did not defend her opinions, because she held conflicting opinions on almost everything,...yet she was immovable’ (Le Guin 2004b:56). Piaget’s concept of reason and discerning between reality and appearance can be applied here. Gry is able to reason from different perspectives, and come to a viewpoint which allows her to see beyond the appearance of a situation to its reality. For Gry, who loves hearing Orrec’s mother’s stories (especially the fable about ‘the girl who was kind to the ants’ (Le Guin 2004b:56)), it is the little things that count.

Gry has a respect for all life forms, no matter their status in the world. Gry's attitude to the natural world is based on mutualism and empathy, as opposed to the typical Upland attitude which involves isolationism and protectionism. This once again ties into the theory posited by eco-critics that 'ecology is a matter of ethics' (Bate 2000:4). Moreover, according to Aldo Leopold (1949, quoted in Bate 2000:4) 'a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community', and 'it is wrong when it tends to do otherwise'. The Uplanders' attitude towards nature is that it is there to serve them and their powers, and perhaps this destructive attitude can account for the suspicion and mistrust amongst the Domains. Gry, however, thinks out of the box and is able to see 'the bigger picture'. Moreover, this passage also demonstrates that Orrec's mother's stories act as counter theories to Orrec's father's enslaving master narrative of destruction. The multiple stories which Gry is exposed to promote her sense of empathy, and allows her to see different perspectives, unlike most Uplanders. It seems Le Guin is trying to demonstrate to the reader, via the character of Gry, that things are not always as they seem, and that it is crucial to consider the appearance of a situation in relation to its reality. This also ties into Jackson's (1981:45-46) theory that in fantasy, 'objects are not readily appropriated through the look: things slide away from the powerful eye/I which seeks to possess them, thus becoming distorted, disintegrated, partial and lapsing into invisibility'. And so, 'vision can never be trusted, senses prove to be deceptive, and the equation of 'I' with the seeing 'eye' proves to be an untrustworthy...affair' (Jackson 1981:49-50).

The concepts of untrustworthy vision and senses are also applicable when it comes to Orrec and the use of his gift of unmaking. On three separate occasions, Orrec is forced to question whether he truly has the gift or not. He is unable to trust his senses on these occasions. In the first incident, Orrec is made to believe, by his father Canoc and the serf Alloc, that he has

used his power to 'unmake' an adder which was about to attack Canoc's foot as he dismounted from his horse. There is confusion because it seems all three men act spontaneously with regard to deterring the adder: Canoc and Alloc, by gesturing at it in an attempt to kill it with their gift, and Orrec, in pointing at it in warning. However, despite Orrec's protests that he does not think it was he who 'unmade' the adder, Canoc and Alloc insist it was. Thus Orrec feels confused: '"I wanted to cry, with the suddenness of the event, and my confusion, for it seemed I had done something I had not known I had done"' (Le Guin 2004b:76). This is the first incident where doubt creeps in and Orrec does not know whether he has really used his gift. In the second incident of the use of his gift, Orrec reacts instinctively when his young and uncontrollable dog, Hamneda, charges his horse one day in excitement, forcing Orrec into action. After yelling at the dog and bringing his rearing colt under control again, Orrec looks around for Hamneda and sees his dead body lying on the ground. Orrec assumes the colt has 'trampled' the dog, but his father and Alloc, who were also present, insist that Orrec has once again used his gift (Le Guin 2004b:116). Orrec, however, is unsure and confused. Later on, when Canoc questions Orrec as to whether or not he intended to kill Hamneda, Orrec assures him that he did not, but in replying he '[does] not speak with entire certainty, because nothing [is] clear or certain to [him] any more' (Le Guin 2004b:117). Orrec is struggling to see past appearances here, and on an intuitive level, he knows things are not quite what they seem to be. This is also the first time the idea that Orrec has the 'wild gift' is mentioned by Canoc, and this idea exacerbates Orrec's struggle with his imposed identity.

In the final incident, during which Orrec and Canoc stop at the Ashbrook hillside so that Orrec may practise his gift, Canoc confirms the idea that Orrec possesses the wild gift. Right after Orrec attempts to use his gift, he momentarily shuts his eyes, still willing the gift's

destruction. During this time, Canoc stands behind Orrec, so that Orrec is unable to see him clearly. When Orrec re-opens his eyes to see the results of his effort, to his horror he sees the landscape lying utterly 'ruined' and 'withered' before him (Le Guin 2004b:122). Orrec also notices a withering tree stump which has been blackened in the episode, and which he initially mistakes for his father. The thought of this terrifies him and he cries out in alarm, only to be reassured from behind by Canoc. Orrec breaks down and confesses that he feels horrified and confused by his gift: '"I can't control it! I can't do it when I want to do it and then when I don't want to do it I do. I don't dare look at you! I don't dare look at anything!"' (Le Guin 2004b:123). Orrec goes on to admit that he is like crazy Blind Caddard who could not control his gift. Canoc does not dispute this, but once again mentions the idea of the uncontrollable 'wild gift' (Le Guin 2004b:123). Orrec is overwhelmed by the thought that he could unleash such destruction. This can also be linked to ideas in eco-criticism in which the 'wasteland grows within and without and with no essential distinction between the two' (Harrison 2000:216). Orrec's apparent destruction of the hillside destroys something in his own spirit, and he is horrified by this. It is in his despair and horror at the devastation that he has seemingly caused that Orrec suggests Canoc blindfold him until he can control the gift.

Orrec is ultimately revolted by the potential of his gift of 'the unmaking'. Initially he is keen to try out his 'power', but when he realises its physical effects on the environment and those in its path, he soon changes his opinion. This feeling of revulsion can be explained in terms of Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). According to Falconer (2010:91), 'Kristeva describes abjection as the sense of revulsion we feel at anything that threatens to disrupt the coherence of the self' and 'thus threaten[s] to permeate the boundaries of identity'. In order to sustain a sense of identity, the abject is thus necessary. It is only in our rejection of an idea or object of revulsion that we can sustain a

coherent idea of who we are in terms of identity. According to Rudd (2010:140), 'the abject becomes a tangible threat because our identity system and conception of order have been disrupted'. Rudd (2010:140) explains that 'ideas of abjection are germane to the theme of growth and maturation in children's literature because the abject is located on the margins of two possibilities: it may resolve by spiralling into death or by forging a new subjectivity'. In the three novels making up the *Annals of the Western Shore*, the protagonists' abjection is not resolved by death, but by the forging of a new subjectivity – although not without a struggle along the way. Orrec, in *Gifts* (2004b), comes to redefine exactly what his gifts are, which enables him to leave the repressive Uplands; Memer, in *Voices* (2006), comes to accept her position as voice of the Oracle and as possible future teacher to the invading Alds; and Gavir, in *Powers* (2007), develops a stronger sense of self so that he can see slavery for what it truly is (oppressive), use his powers of storytelling openly, and attain his goal of education under the mastery of Orrec. In order to move forwards from initial ideas of the self, which may ultimately be limiting, the protagonists need to be aware of or overcome their initial abjection. In the awareness or overcoming of abjection, there is a thus a positive movement towards freedom and the formation of a new identity.

Initially, it seems to be Orrec's shock at not being able to control his gift which unsettles him, but as the story develops, Orrec acknowledges that he is repulsed by the nature of his gift. The first time he unknowingly uses his gift (when saving his father from a potential snake-bite by 'unmaking' an adder), he is taken aback by his unintentional action: '[I]t seemed I had done something I did not know I had done' (Le Guin 2004b:76). A few moments after the event, Orrec experiences abjection as he acknowledges: 'I did not want to look at what had been the snake' (Le Guin 2004b:76). According to Kristeva (1982:4), the 'corpse, seen without God and outside of science, is the utmost of abjection. It is death inflecting life'. It is

this confrontation with death that thus ‘threatens’ to undo Orrec’s ‘boundaries of identity’. He thus experiences abjection when having to look upon the results of his gift. Later on, Gry questions him about his gift. It is at this point that his true feelings about its nature surface: ‘Why do I have to kill something, ruin it, destroy it? Why is that my gift?’ (Le Guin 2004b:100). Orrec is struggling to accept the nature of his gift – its end-result is death and destruction. When Orrec’s father tries to talk him into testing out his powers shortly thereafter, Orrec is uncertain about whether he wants to: ‘All [he] knew by now was that [he] refused to be tested, refused to try out [that] terrible power, refused to let it be what [he] was’ (Le Guin 2004b:107). Here there is an active denial of his power and of allowing it to form his identity. The second time Orrec erroneously uses his powers, in the attack by his strong-willed dog, Hamneda, he comes to realize he has killed the dog; he states: ‘I stared at Hamneda...He lay boneless, shapeless...I swung off my horse, but I could not go nearer that thing lying on the pavement’ (Le Guin 2004b:116). The use of the adjective ‘thing’ to describe his dog’s carcass signals Orrec’s attempt to abject and distance himself from the repugnant remains of the dead dog. Similarly, in his attempt to overcome the erratic and uncontrollable use of his gift, when Orrec decides to test it on the Ashbrook hillside whilst out riding with his father, he is further repulsed: ‘When I took my hands away from my eyes, I turned my head away at once, terrified by what I saw. Half the hillside before us was as if a whirlwind of fire had swept across it – ruined, withered’ (Le Guin 2004b:122). Orrec is shocked by the result of his gift: ‘Any living thing that had been there was dead. All the delicate, coherent, complex shapes of the things that had been there were destroyed. The ash tree was a hideous, branchless stump’ (Le Guin 2004b:124). Orrec’s sense of abjection with regard to his gift is apparent in his use of adjectives such as ‘ruined’ versus ‘delicate’, ‘withered’ versus ‘coherent’, and ‘hideous’ versus ‘complex’, all of which contrast destruction, lifelessness and ugliness with generative and life-affirming beauty. In Orrec’s

opinion, there are no redeeming qualities connected to his gift.

It is because of his sense of abjection that Orrec decides to agree to being blindfolded by his father, so that he can no longer use the sense of sight necessary to his alleged gift of unmaking. The concept of abjection is a relevant one for adolescent readers. During adolescence many physical and emotional changes which are part of the transition from childhood to adulthood are experienced. Adolescence is essentially a time when identities 'do not exist or only barely do so – double, fuzzy, heterogenous' (Kristeva 1982:207). And it is for this reason that adolescence can be likened to abjection, which also 'breaches and challenges boundaries' (Coats 2004:142). This is what Orrec and Gry go through; they breach and challenge the imposed identities given to them by their families and communities.

Significantly, Orrec immediately regrets suggesting the blindfold solution, admitting that '[p]erhaps there was some hope in [him] that [his] father would have a different, a better plan' (Le Guin 2004b:124). But Canoc, after a long pause and in a quiet voice, 'as if ashamed', states it would be best '"for a while" (Le Guin 2004b:124). And so that night, after admitting to his mother that he cannot control his gift, and feeling deeply concerned that he may harm the people he loves, Orrec submits to being blindfolded by Canoc: 'I only remember my own agony. And the relief at last, when my father came to me...and gently took my hands down from my face, slipped a cloth over my eyes, and tied it at the back of my head....Then I had darkness' (Le Guin 2004b:131). The idea of being immersed in darkness can be likened to being immersed in the unknown or in ignorance. From then onwards, Orrec becomes useless around the Caspromant farm since he cannot carry out his daily life as normal. It is as if he has returned to infancy and is regressing instead of maturing:

> It's a queer business, making oneself blind....and a hard one, but I kept to it. The more impatient I was with the helplessness and dreariness of being sightless and

> the more I raged against the blindfold, the more I feared to lift it....When I wore it, I could not kill what I loved. I remembered what my fear and anger had done....If I could not learn to use my power, I could learn how not to use it. That was what I willed to do, because only so could my will act. Only in this bondage could I have any freedom (Le Guin 2004b:133).

Orrec appears to be conflicted in this paradoxical situation. On the one hand, he is relieved at having the consequences of his gift suppressed by the blindfold, and so feels secure in his ‘blindness’, but on the other hand, he is severely frustrated and enslaved by the blindfold because it limits his freedom in the world. It is ironic that he perceives this bondage as a sort of freedom. It is a freedom, but only a limited form of it. It is the freedom of slavery, that is, a freedom from responsibility.

The idea of a limited freedom relates to Foucault’s (1976, cited in Trites 2000:x) notion of power ‘to be both enabling and repressive’. On the one hand, Orrec’s newfound gift/power requires that he subject himself to blindfolding thus ‘enabling’ him to protect his loved ones, but in so doing he becomes so repressed as to become powerless in his everyday normal functioning. However, according to Trites (2000:55), this process of submission to an authority figure or an imposed identity is typical of adolescent characters in young adult novels because they usually ‘embrace repression as a precursor to empowerment’, and so adolescent novels can show readers that ‘a certain amount of repression [is actually] a cultural imperative’. In order to contribute to and fit into society, Orrec must do the responsible thing and submit to being blindfolded:

> When my uselessness and helplessness carked me, when my own resolution weakened and I yearned to untie my blindfold and take back my whole lost inheritance of light, I came up against the immovable figure of my father. I was a mortal danger to Canoc and all his people. With my eyes sealed, I was his shield and support. My blindness was my use (Le Guin 2004b:180).

This submission, however, cannot last forever, and its consequent repression is eventually what goads Orrec into empowering himself later on in the novel.

Orrec admits that '[s]ightless, [he feels] forever vulnerable, knowing that anybody could make a fool of [him] or hurt [him]' (Le Guin 2004b:134). According to Jackson (1981:49-50), that 'which is not seen...is not "known" and...remains as a threat' and so the 'relation of the individual subject to the world, to others,...ceases to be known or safe, and problems of apprehension (in the sense of perceiving and of fearing) become central to the modern fantastic'. This idea of the unseen or unknown as a threat is evident in Orrec's admission that he feels vulnerable in his blindness. However, it can also relate to Orrec's perception of his 'unknowable' or 'uncontrollable' gift itself. Since the nature of his own gift is hidden from or unknown to him, it ultimately causes his fear. And this is what adolescent readers need to learn about exerting their own personal power in the world – they have to test authoritative boundaries initially from a position of the unknown.

Orrec can only exert a limited form of control over his world when blindfolded. However, his mother does not approve of his blindfolding, and believes Orrec is being self-destructive in his self-delusion: 'To her it was monstrous, the result of monstrous, unnatural powers or beliefs. "You can take the blindfold off when you're with me, Orrec," she said...."It is silly to be afraid....You'll never hurt me. I know that"' (Le Guin 2004b:134). However, Orrec is so determined not to hurt his family he chooses to ignore her reasoning, even when she threatens to destroy one of the things he loves most, a book she has made by hand for him. Melle threatens to burn the book, saying it is useless to Orrec now, and that it is obvious he no longer wants it: '"You don't want it. You've closed your eyes – you've closed your mind"' (Le Guin 2004b:135). The rejected book is symbolic of story and multiplicity, both of which Orrec is actively rejecting. The closing of the mind can be likened to ignorance and a desire to escape reality. This suggests that although Orrec chooses to believe he is doing good, in fact, his fear is limiting him and is diminishing the quality of his young life. The notion of

self-knowledge is brought in here. It is Orrec's mother who appears to know him better than he knows himself, and it is only through coming to know and trust in himself that Orrec will be able to free himself from his fear. Furthermore, Orrec is aware that he is acting out of fear: 'And so in fear of this random and terrible power I had blinded myself – or Canoc had blinded me – though others said no, only sealed [my] eyes with a blindfold' (Le Guin 2004b:139). Le Guin seems to be highlighting the way in which fear can be used as a way of extending familial control over adolescents.

It is only at Melle's deathbed that Orrec is finally able to gather the courage to take off his blindfold and to look upon her for the last time. He does this at her request, initially hesitating but finally consenting when she reasons that he cannot possibly do her any further harm since she is already dying. Melle knows she has nothing to fear from Orrec's power and so he finally lowers the blindfold to look at her: 'Her eyes looked up into mine out of the little sunken ruin of her face and body' (Le Guin 2004b:200-201). After their final goodbyes, Orrec replaces the blindfold. That evening his mother finally passes away. Canoc seems to take Melle's death worse than Orrec does, and as a result Orrec is called upon by the farm's people to act as a go-between for them to Canoc. On these occasions, Orrec comes to realise that he has no physical fear of Canoc or Canoc's gift, a realisation that allows him to awaken to the reality Melle expressed to him – that is, that she knew he could never harm her:

> When I realised that, when I thought of [my lack of fear of Canoc], a shock ran through me. This was no mere belief, it was knowledge. I knew he would not hurt me. I knew I would not have hurt her. So I could have taken off my blindfold, when I was with her. I could have seen her, all that last year. I could have cared for her, been useful to her, read to her, as well as telling my foolish stories. I could have seen her dear face not that once, but all year, all year long!...There was no one to punish for it but myself, or [Canoc]. (Le Guin 2004b:204-205)

Orrec resents that he has missed out on quality time with his mother, something he can never regain. Moreover, Orrec's true feelings about his own storymaking are revealed here in the

adjective ‘foolish’. It seems he has inherited his father’s attitude towards story as something frivolous and not worthwhile. If Orrec wishes to mature, this attitude needs to change. Over the following year, Orrec starts reflecting on the price he has paid for his fear and his mistrust of self. Although Orrec contemplates this, he does not immediately remove the blindfold. He does, however, become more withdrawn and starts to brood over the situation, building up resentment towards Canoc: ‘All I knew then was that he was not paying the price I paid for our gift’ (Le Guin 2004b:211). Whenever Gry comes to visit Orrec in order to listen to his storytelling, she notices how withdrawn and depressed he is. When she unthinkingly invites him to come and ‘see’ her new filly one day, Orrec becomes emotional and defensive. Gry is taken aback by Orrec’s outburst and, like Melle, accuses him of choosing blindness: ‘“There’s nothing wrong with your [head] except that you don’t use it any more. Exactly like your eyes!”‘ (Le Guin 2004b:215). After this episode, they decide to go for a walk, and they come across the Ashbrook hillside. Gry describes how the landscape still looks ruined. Significantly, Orrec openly admits to her that he does not even remember physically causing the destruction. Orrec usually feels ashamed of his apparent gift (or of the possibility he may not have it) and does not like to discuss this with Gry. However, now he says it was as if he had just ‘opened [his] eyes and it was done’ (Le Guin 2004b:218). Gry proffers the idea that perhaps he had not truly ‘meant’ to destroy the landscape, but Orrec is still unsure. This doubt in Orrec’s mind serves to show that his gift is still something he is uncertain of and fears. But at least there is an indication that he is starting to review the nature of his gift thanks to Gry’s mediation, since she, in effect, restories this incident for him.

At about this time, Orrec also starts recalling the books his mother wrote for him when she was ill and he takes one of these books from her room as a keepsake. Ironically, it is the book that comes to free Orrec’s mindset about his blindfolding. That night he is strongly tempted to

look at it and so briefly removes his blindfold to do so. Upon looking at the book, he turns to look at his hand and the movements he makes with it, and then finally looks out through the window at the stars in the sky. He then replaces the blindfold, but is aware of how this simple action has affected him psychologically: ‘I had never thought for a moment, as I [had] looked at the book and my hand, that I might destroy [the stars]; the thought of my perilous gift had not entered my mind; it had been filled with the gift of seeing. Because I could see, could I destroy the stars?’ (Le Guin 2004b:224). Orrec is still questioning his gift, but more importantly, he is questioning his capabilities, his motives and his own true desires. As he uses his powers of reasoning, it seems to dawn on him that it would be unlikely he would will destruction on something without truly intending to do so.

Over the next few days, Orrec starts reading his mother’s book every morning in his room. Eventually he confides in Gry and reveals to her that he has been reading it. Moreover, he has come to realise that his gift lies not in ‘unmaking’ or destruction, but in reading and in storytelling. Gry finally convinces Orrec to lift his blindfold and to look at her. This action leads him to build up the courage to confront Canoc about his blindfold and to remove it once and for all:

> “You tricked me. Maybe you tricked yourself because you couldn’t stand it that your son wasn’t what you wanted. I don’t know. I don’t care. I know you can’t use me any longer. My eyes or my blindness. They’re not yours, they’re mine. I won’t let your lies cheat me any more. I won’t let your shame shame me any more. Find yourself another son, since this one’s not good enough”. (Le Guin 2004b:258)

Orrec knows that Canoc is well aware of the likelihood that he never truly had the ‘wild gift’, and that Canoc has manipulated Orrec in order to protect the Domain. Upon tearing off the blindfold, Orrec experiences relief because he has finally been honest with himself and with Canoc. But it is at this point that Orrec questions his identity and that he recalls a question Gry has asked about their gifts: ‘“I had my eyes back, but what good was I? *Who are we*

now? Gry had asked. If I was not my father's son, who was I?"' (Le Guin 2004b:259). The questioning of his identity based on a lack of self-knowledge is relevant here. Without the social construct of his dangerous reputation, Orrec no longer knows his place in the world.

The next day brings news of a raid on Caspromant by Brantor Ogge. At last, Orrec feels he can be of use and is allowed to join the defence party in riding out to the borders of their land to deter the raiders. Upon being assigned lookout duty, Orrec jubilantly describes how he 'stood watching south, west, north. Watching! Using [his] eyes! Being of use, not a useless lump in a blindfold led about by a girl and a dog!' (Le Guin 2004b:263). The idea of being of use now gives Orrec's life a direction and purpose. And so the loss of the prestige or ability of the gift of unmaking is no longer important to him: 'What if I had no gift? I had my eyesight, and my anger, and a knife' (Le Guin 2004b:263). Ironically, it is through the self-realisation that he no longer possesses or has never even possessed a gift of power that Orrec finally feels enabled and empowered.

Orrec goes to extremes, to a place of denial and even self-afflicted disability, in order to reject his gift. But even in this process, he is still conflicted about his feelings and motives. He initially finds it hard to rebel against Canoc's paternal authority:

> I had never promised my father not to lift the blindfold. There was no bond of words, but there was a bond, and it held me. Yet it had held me when there was no need for it – it had kept me from seeing my mother all the last year of her life, and made me useless to her, for no reason. Or rather, for the reason that my blindness was useful to my father, making me his weapon, his threat against enemies. But was my loyalty only to him? I could not get any further than that for a long time. (Le Guin 2004b:220-221)

Orrec, out of an overdeveloped sense of loyalty to Canoc and his people, thus suppresses his full identity and so fails to explore his true nature. However, this situation is ironic since it turns out that Orrec does not in fact possess the true gift of unmaking, and that it has been his

father who has manipulated him into believing that he has it all along. However, Orrec seems to be aware of this possibility, even though he did not dare admit this to himself, and so he tells Gry:

> "It could have been Father. Every time....I knew that. I knew it all along. But I didn't dare think it....I had to believe it was me. That I had the gift. That I did those things....I had to believe it. I have to believe it so other people will believe it, so they'll be afraid of me and keep away from the borders of Caspromant! Isn't that the good of the gift? Isn't that what it's for? Isn't that what it does? Isn't that what a brantor does for his people?" (Le Guin 2004b:251).

Orrec realizes that he has been pressurised by the idea of familial and social responsibility that comes with the gift. This questioning reaffirms the fact that Orrec's identity has been externally imposed on him. When Orrec eventually finds the courage to rebel and to remove the blindfold and to ascertain for himself whether he has the gift or not, he is finally able to reveal his true nature to himself and to others. His true gift lies in storymaking and recital, and this fact brings him relief and allows him to move into a sense of acceptance. It is thus significant that he rejects his non-existent gift of the unmaking, intuiting that this is not conducive to his sensitive and creative nature. Therefore, the abjection Orrec experiences initially in the novel serves to reveal who he is not, more than it serves to reveal who he is.

Orrec's story can be likened to metanarrative, that is, a narrative which is self-reflexive and which makes the reader aware that it is a narrative. This 'helps to create the illusion of a 'teller', a personalized voice serving as a narrator' (Nünning 2004:18). A personalized voice which tells a story of experience may add to the verisimilitude of the story, and thus the issues that it explores. The narrative structure Le Guin uses in *Gifts* is complex in that it functions in flashback and is presented as a story. It thus takes the perspective of Orrec looking back on his experiences and commenting on this in places. Le Guin is thus able to take advantage of the fact that her protagonist speaks from a place of experience and has

since acquired insight and wisdom. And just as other stories have liberated Orrec, so his story becomes liberation. The initial reason for Orrec's description of his life in the Uplands and of his gift, is recounting the purpose of his being blindfolded to the travelling Lowlander, Emmon. Orrec recalls Emmon and the advice he gave Gry and himself before leaving the farm. He realises that Emmon was fond of both of them, but that he pitied them for their isolated way of living. Emmon is taken aback when Orrec first tells him of his self-chosen blindfolding: 'When he realised that although I'd said my father had sealed my eyes, it was I who kept them blindfolded, he was really shocked. "You do that to yourself?" he said. "But you're mad, Orrec. There's no harm in you. You wouldn't hurt a fly if you stared at it all day!"' (Le Guin 2004b:239). Even Emmon is able to see Orrec's gentle nature, and finds it hard to believe that Orrec would deny this in himself. Emmon goes on to suggest that Orrec and Gry consider leaving the superstitious and isolated Uplands to go travelling. He describes how people pay good money 'to hear tellers and singers' (Le Guin 2004b:247). The reality is that Orrec's true power lies in creation, specifically the creation and telling of stories, not in destruction. His is not a gift of detraction, but rather a gift of enrichment. Emmon chastises Orrec's choice of self-blinding by adding: '"if I were you, I'd open my eyes and see what I had within hand's reach"' (Le Guin 2004b:247), which is a reference to the beautiful Gry, who is also responsible for the enrichment of others' lives through her consistent support and empathy. Thus it is Emmon's advice and encouragement that led Gry and Orrec to leave their Domains, and travel into the Lowlands, expanding their horizons, and enriching their own lives, as well as the lives of others. This circumstance has only been made possible through self-knowledge, and the realisation and acknowledgement of a new identity conducive to their true natures.

Orrec's gift of making opposes that of unmaking. More importantly, Orrec makes himself as

opposed to being unmade. It is Orrec's making of his own narrative, rather than his acceptance of the one created for or imposed on him by his family, that finally enables him to free himself. Orrec's rebellion does not fit into Roberta Trites's idea of an 'acceptable rebellion' because he does not reintegrate into the system against which he rebels, nor does perish because of this. In fact, he is liberated from the burden of his imposed identity and is then free to move on with his life outside of the restrictive Uplands. In the opening of Chapter 2 in *Gifts*, Orrec, as narrator, comments on his story and proffers advice to the reader at the same time: 'To see that your life is a story while you're in the middle of living it may be a help to living it well' (Le Guin 2004b:15). Le Guin suggests through Orrec's narration that it is always wise to remember that people make active choices in life and can choose to re-direct, and thus to re-story their lives, whenever required. *Gifts* is a story of Orrec's experience of empowerment, and since it is intended to be read by adolescent readers, it may provide suggestions for similar empowerment in their own lives.

Chapter 3 – Overcoming Silence:

Hybridity and the Third Space, Perception, and the Power of Story in *Voices*

> Fear breeds silence, and then the silence breeds fear, and I let it rule me. Even there, in that room, the only place in the world where I knew who I was. I wouldn't let myself guess who I might become. (Le Guin 2006:32)

In *Voices* (2006), the second novel in Ursula Le Guin's *Annals of the Western Shore* series, the 9–year old protagonist, Memer Galva, is drawn into a forbidden world of books and reading, an act of rebellion which eventually leads to her liberation from enslavement. Le Guin uses the setting of an invaded and enslaved city, Ansul, to highlight ways in which liberation from oppression can be attained. Three central concepts emerge in this novel as a means to do this: hybridity and the Third Space, perception (especially visual and auditory), and the role of story. All three concepts can also be linked to identity, whether imposed, perceived, chosen, or created/'storied'. This chapter focuses on these central concepts and their relation to identity formation, and demonstrates how they can lead to liberation from oppression. It also suggests how these concepts may be relevant to adolescent readers.

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theories of hybridity and the Third Space, explored in his book *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 elaborated on in the works of another post-colonialist theorist Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978), in which the Other is seen as anything/anybody culturally or racially different from anything/anybody of the West. Bhabha (1994:2) uses this idea of Otherness, along with his own concept of hybridity, to highlight the process undergone by the colonized 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 which Bhabha is referring to is a cultural identity which is created by the colonized when they come into contact with the culture of the colonizer. It is an identity which is not original to either the colonized’s or the colonizer’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 – singular or communal – 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)

What Bhabha is suggesting here is that this act of hybridity is a means of identity creation, and is powerful enough to reshape societies.

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. He refers to this Third Space as ‘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 1994:2)

Bhabha states that culture automatically implies difference, what he refers to as ‘domains of difference’, but theorizes that what is important is where there is an overlap between cultures, that is, something in common. It is the way difference and commonality are negotiated by the colonized which allows for an ‘in-between space’. This space enables the colonized 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 accepting or rejecting certain cultural values and differences, the colonized are able to ‘hybridize’ themselves, that is, take on various cultural aspects of their environments, and thus become more adaptive and

empowered, and so ultimately able to 'outwit' their oppressors. Bhabha's Third Space can also be likened to Christine Wilkie-Stibbs's concept of 'borderland children' in her article 'Borderland Children: Reflections on Narratives of Abjection' (2006). 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, for example, because they have been adopted, have step-parents or step-siblings, or are missing a parent for whatever reason. They thus 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. These concepts are important in understanding some of the characters' positions in *Voices* and are explored more fully in this chapter.

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 seventeen-year-long occupation which follows it, puts an end to this. The Alds worship a sun-god, Atth, and see books and writing as evil, the works of demons and the Other Lord, an evil rival to Atth. The Alds are a violent people. They have invaded Ansul on the pretext of destroying the Other Lord, an act which will finally allow for the coming of Atth on earth. 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. Memer Galva is born as a result of the rape of her mother by an Ald soldier. So although she considers herself a citizen of Ansul, she has Ald blood. From the beginning of the novel, Memer's strong sense of hatred towards the invading Alds in Ansul 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, probably due to the difficult times experienced in Ansul after the initial invasion, 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 uses the language of the oppressor and sarcastically refers to herself as 'the half-breed' (Le Guin 2006:318), which further reveals her frustration with her identity. She is essentially using 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 in this way.

Memer is raised by various servants in the House of Galvamand. The house is also known as the House of the Oracle, because in times past, citizens would come to the house to receive messages from an ancient power, called the Oracle, which was said to reside there. Due to the Ald invasion, however, all talk of the Oracle is forbidden and knowledge of it is kept secret. Memer is also raised by her relative, Sulter Galver, the Waylord of Ansul (one of the highest official positions held in Ansul before the Ald invasion). Memer is in awe of the Waylord since he has not only survived capture and brutal, crippling torture at the hands of the invading Alds, but also teaches her to read the forbidden works of the poets. This secret work is carried out 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). At first Memer is under the impression that it is only she who comes to seek sanctuary in the secret chamber, but it turns out that the Waylord uses the chamber too. Thus it comes as a shock to Memer to find him there one day when she has been seeking refuge from the other household women. However, the Waylord is

just as shocked to see Memer entering the room and he reacts violently at first, mistaking her for an unwanted intruder: 'at this moment he was fierce. His eyes had a fire in them as they did when he spoke the Praise of Sampa the Destroyer. They were dark, but the fire would come into them like the smoulder of opal in dark rock' (Le Guin 2006:8). Strong imagery is used here in connection with the eyes to evoke the sense of fear and violence which this incident has provoked. This links to the concept of vision/perception and knowledge which is explored in this chapter. It also functions to set the scene for the explanation of why the chamber is a secret one – 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 at risk of being wiped out by the Alds.

Memer has always gravitated towards the hidden books in the secret room and is more than happy to be taught how to read by the Waylord. It is also her duty to take care of the household gods, who play an important role in the everyday lives of the citizens of Ansul. This worship, like books and writing, must be kept secret from the Alds, who destroy anything they suspect of being blasphemous. Memer thus harbours great resentment towards and hatred for the Alds. 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. I was certain that there were no demons and that the Waylord had no evil powers. Hadn't they tortured him for a year to make him confess his wicked arts, and let him go because he had nothing to confess? (Le Guin 2006:30-31)

It is clear that Memer still harbours uncertainty and fear with regard to the supernatural

power housed in Galvamand, but tries to overcome this through a process of questioning. She thus tries to convince herself that the Alds are wrong. Whenever she talks of the Alds, Memer voices her negative impression of them; for example, she complains about the behaviour of Ansul '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, despite admitting that she does not know that much about them. By submitting to this type of mindset, Memer is ironically perpetuating the same 'racialized violence' by which she feels victimized. Although she does eventually agree to go along, she still feels fear and contempt for the Alds.

Memer often wishes she could join her fellow citizens in overthrowing the Alds and taking back the city of Ansul. However, what Memer and the majority of her fellow citizens lack is any desire to try and integrate with the long-standing invaders. This relates to an important question raised by Bhabha (1994:2) about empowerment and collaboration:

> How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?

Voices seems to explore this very dilemma. The invading Ald soldiers have been stationed in Ansul without further directive other than occupying the territory itself, and so are 'deprived'

of their own homes and families, and are 'discriminated' against in turn by the citizens of Ansul. There is much antagonism and conflict between the two parties, and their values, especially their religious beliefs, seem to be 'incommensurable'. There is only one area in which both Alds and Ansul citizens find any common ground – and that is in the power of story.

The successful overthrow of the Alds in Ansul is strongly linked to the power of story, and Orrec (from *Gifts*, 2004b) plays a central role with regard to this in *Voices*. As fate would have it, Memer stumbles into the path of Orrec and Gry (also from *Gifts*), who are visiting the city because they have heard of its once famous library and because Orrec has been invited to Ansul by Gand Ioratth, 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 gifts have allowed them to travel and to spread knowledge of poetry and ideas of freedom. And so it seems that Gry's original suspicion in *Gifts* that their powers might be used positively has come to fruition. It is through Gry's and Orrec's chance encounter with Memer that they are eventually lodged at the House of Galvamand during their stay. 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. Orrec's talents are appreciated by many of the Alds, apart from the priests and Ioratth's son, Iddor, who secretly plans to overthrow his own father and to take his place by force. As Ioratth becomes more taken with Orrec, Iddor becomes more threatened by his presence. Finally, a plot by the enslaved citizens of Ansul to overthrow the Alds by setting their tented quarters on fire allows Iddor to take action against his father. At this point a violent riot ensues and the citizens must flee to protect themselves from the angry Alds. And so Gry and Orrec become involved in the plot by some citizens to overthrow the Alds and regain the city's freedom. All of this hinges

on Orrec's position as mediator between the two parties and as a renowned storyteller.

It is Orrec's gift for words which has led him to come to Ansul, and which has a great impact on Memer, who also has a love for poetry, books, and stories. Le Guin's use of these ideas can be linked to her belief in the power of story. According to Le Guin ([1980] 1989:44-45) in her essay 'Some Thoughts on Narrative', fiction in particular, and narration in general, 'may be seen...as an active encounter with the environment by means of posing options and alternatives and an enlargement of present reality by connecting to the unverifiable past and the unpredictable future'. In other words, storytelling allows for an analysis of the present, taking into consideration the past and the future, and thus allowing for alternative perspectives to be developed. It is thus a method for determining possibilities. This is because

> ...[o]nly the imagination can get us out of the bind of the eternal present, inventing or hypothesizing or pretending or discovering a way that reason can then follow into the infinity of options, a clue through the labyrinths of choice, a golden string, the story, leading us to the freedom that is properly human, the freedom open to those whose minds can accept unreality. (Le Guin [1980] 1989:45)

Le Guin suggests that imagination and reason are interconnected, and that storytelling is a means of emancipation for the human mind, and can be a step towards freedom itself.

Le Guin's concept of the liberating power of story can also be linked to the therapeutic concepts found in narrative therapy and bibliotherapy. According to Alice Morgan (2000:14), narrative therapists are concerned with 'stories of identity that will assist people to break from the influence of the problems they are facing'. It is Orrec's variety of storytelling (both from the Ald culture and other 'foreign' cultures) that wins over the Gand of the Alds and which leads the Gand to reconsider the plight of the repressed Ansul citizens, thus leaving him more open to negotiate peace terms with them. Carolyn Shrodes (1949, quoted in Mazza 2003:8) defines Bibliotherapy as 'the process of dynamic interaction between the personality

of the reader and literature as a psychological field which may be used for personality assessment, adjustment and growth'. In *Voices*, it is the legendary stories and heroic poetry that Memer reads that inspire her to rebel against the Alds. Thus 'alternative stories can reduce the influence of problems and create new possibilities for living' (Morgan 2000:14). It is only in the re-storying of their lives and a subsequent imagining of a possible future that the citizens of Ansul can liberate themselves from Ald domination.

The Alds are heartless and cruel towards the citizens, and take anything they want from anyone. They do not allow female citizens freedom and enslave those who dare 'whore' themselves openly by being in the streets. They have no interest in true integration with the city of Ansul. The Alds are known for their overinflated sense of respect for their horses, which, it is joked, they treat better than their own wives. 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. Gry aptly describes an impression of this covetous attitude of the male Alds: '"They're like stallions or buck rabbits....Never a moment they're not anxious about a rival male, or a female getting loose"' (Le Guin 2006:117). For this reason it is dangerous for the women of Ansul to walk about freely in the city. The Ald soldiers have occupied the city for over seventeen years, during which they have been mostly deprived of the company of women. Memer has thus never known any freedom; she has grown up under the rule of the Alds. And so, in order to survive in this occupied society in which she finds herself, Memer must always go about in disguise as a young boy.

The application of the idea of hybridity can be seen with regard to how Gry and Memer outwit the Alds in disguising themselves as males. As has already been mentioned, the Alds are ignorant when it comes to their preconceptions about women. Thus Gry, on wanting to attend Orrec's visits to Gand Ioratth, insists on accompanying him but 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 idea can be linked to the idea of Orrec's agreeing to being blindfolded in *Gifts* (2004b) due to his refusal to truly 'see' the nature of his own power. This is also an echo of what the Waylord says about the Alds to Memer in the chamber earlier on in the novel, that 'they will not look, they will not see' (Le Guin 2006:90). This shows the Alds' closed-mindedness. The point being made here is that it is prejudiced ignorance that holds the Alds back, and prevents them seeing things as they truly are, and from taking part in society in a healthy and productive way. Another point is that Memer and Gry are easily able to 'outwit' the Alds due to the Alds' egotistical ignorance about women.

According to Hoogvelt (1997, quoted in Meredith 1998:2) 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'. The Alds 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'. The concept of a 'superior intelligence' is further demonstrated by Memer when she recounts Ista's words to her about her outings to the marketplace:

> Ista was always afraid Sosta 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 like Sosta's. '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.

The concept of hybridization is 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. Moreover, 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 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' expectations of the role of females and so they evade being discriminated against. This relates to the idea that ''the creative, dynamic nature of youth culture' (Willis (1990), quoted in Lesko & Talburt 2012:253) means that young people are a particularly seductive population to attach to the vanguard of hybridity' (Lesko & Talburt 2012:253).

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 is dynamic and inventive: 'In the hybrid space of youth culture, forms, practices, identities, and meanings are "appropriated, translated, rehistoricized, and read anew"' (Bhabha (1994), quoted in Nilan 2012:253). This also allows for their liberation from identities which may be imposed on them from external sources. The idea of rebellion in association with adolescence can also be applied to the psychoanalytical theory of cultural empowerment posited by Frantz Fanon (1967, quoted 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 applied to adolescence, and more specifically, adolescent rebellion. 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 apologize 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 recognized, and to bestow recognition in turn. And this is also perhaps where the adolescent's desire to exert power in the world can be brought in as well (a concept which is explored more fully in Chapter 4).

The second part of the quote from Fanon, in which he considers the idea of 'introducing invention into existence' is exactly what Bhabha 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 one 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 to Fanon's quotation 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 iteration, the re-creation of the self in the world'. It could be argued that this is what adolescents are doing when they decide to empower themselves through rebellion against authority figures, just as Gry and Memer do when they are in disguise 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 escape socially determined roles and identities fully:

> [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. And whether people self-select the characteristics associated with a group or whether those characteristics are imposed on them by the perception of others, their sense of affiliation with a group serves in some way as a limiting factor....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 realizes that she can only have a chance at some freedom of movement if she adheres to the Alds' concepts of gender expectations, namely that females are obedient and subservient.

Memer, whilst seemingly only operating on the sidelines to Orrec and Gry throughout the novel, is eventually called upon by the Waylord to take a stand against Ald oppression.

Memer has, for a long time, been frightened of some of the books kept in the secret room, which she knows have something supernatural about them – books which groan to her, bleed and prophesy. It is ironic that the small, unimposing Memer becomes a channel for a great power, the Oracle, which speaks out against enslavement. The prophetic answer given to Memer in reply to her question 'how can [Ansul] be free of the Alds' (Le Guin 2006:190) is that '[b]roken mends broken' (Le Guin 2006:188). This seems to refer to both the citizens of Ansul and the Alds: the citizens are broken because they have been enslaved and the Alds are broken because they are enslavers, and because their minds are closed to learning and so they are shut off from the rest of the world by their ignorance. It is only when the Waylord comes out to greet the people of Ansul seeking refuge at the House of Galvamand after the riot that Memer realises that she is indeed the Oracle; it is her voice which speaks out to both the people and the Alds and says '[l]et them set free' (Le Guin 2006:262). This message carries an important lesson for Memer, her fellow citizens and the Alds themselves; they need to overcome their hatred and open their minds to accepting and integrating with each other. After the Oracle's message is delivered, the citizens of Ansul, along with Orrec, go to free Gand Ioratth from a room in the Council House where he has been imprisoned by Iddor. At this point, Ioratth realises he may lose power and so allows Orrec to address the people of Ansul in the hope that a peaceful arrangement can be made. Eventually, through much discussion and negotiation, the people of Ansul agree to become a protectorate of the Alds. As part of this process, Memer is asked by the Waylord if she could teach the Gand Ioratth to read, a great challenge for someone so young, but one to which she agrees. It is only on this frightening path of learning to see who she really is that Memer is able to open her mind, to use her voice and learning, and thereby transcend her enslavement, and work towards a potentially harmonious future with the Alds. Thus self-perception/self-knowledge, as well as learnt knowledge, are all used in this novel as a means of setting the mind free and

overcoming enslavement.

In *Gifts* (Le Guin 2004b) and in *Voices* (2006), ideas of self-knowledge and perception are evident. Just as vision and knowledge are important motifs in *Gifts*, so hearing and knowledge are important motifs in *Voices*. There are, however, instances where vision is also used as a motif. The epigraph of *Voices* is a poem entitled ‘Caspro’s Hymn’. This is significant because it not only refers to Orrec Caspro, the storyteller from *Gifts*, but it also focuses on the idea of liberty, and of the ‘seeking’ of light through the darkness by the ‘eyes’ and of the soul which has been ‘blinded’ by the bondage of servitude:

CASPRO’S HYMN

As in the dark of winter night
Our eyes seek dawn,
As in the bonds of bitter cold
The heart craves sun,
So blinded and so bound, the soul
Cries out to thee;
Be our light, our fire, our life,
Liberty!

The poem is simple yet powerful in its construction because its diction draws upon the ideas of enslavement (‘bonds’, ‘bound’) and the need to overcome this (‘[o]ur eyes seek dawn’, ‘[t]he heart craves sun’, ‘the soul/cries out’). This need to overcome enslavement is especially emphasized in the second last line: ‘Be our light, our fire, our life’. This line suggests that liberty is a guiding light, and that it is a concept which offers warmth and comfort, or perhaps even fuels the flames of the enslaveds’ desire for emancipation, and that it is ultimately their only goal in life and is thus their entire reason for existence. Only by perceiving liberty in this all-consuming way can the enslaved move towards liberty. Just as in *Gifts*, the poem uses the motif of vision as a means to freedom. It thus effectively evokes a sense of thematic continuation between the two novels.

When we are first introduced to Memer, she is escaping an argument she is having with her adoptive bymother, Ista, by running to the secret chamber of books in the House of Galvamand. In order to enter the chamber, Memer must write a secret word in the air in front of its concealed entrance, so that its hidden door will reveal itself and open for her. Memer describes how she feels safe in knowing she is able to take refuge in the secret chamber, but also admits that it scares her:

> I stayed in the lighter part of the room,....I didn't like the farther end, where it grows dark and the ceiling comes down lower. In my mind I called that the shadow end, and I almost always stayed away from it. But even my fear of the shadow end was part of my secret, my kingdom of solitude. (Le Guin 2006:2-3)

Immediately a parallel can be drawn between Orrec's sense of both refuge and fear in the darkness of his blindfolding in *Gifts* and Memer's sense of refuge and fear in the secret chamber. Even more significant though is the fact that it is the power of vision which enables Memer to enter the room, the safehaven she has been using since she was very young, when her mother was still alive. Memer acknowledges how the room 'saved [her] and [her] mother from the enemy', and she reflects that either her mother must have shown her how to write the secret word, or she simply 'saw her [mother] do it and remembered [it]' (Le Guin 2006:10). Memer describes how in her memory she 'could see the shapes of the letters being written on the air, though [she] couldn't see the hand that wrote them' (Le Guin 2006:10). The motif of vision as a means of knowledge can be seen here. Moreover, just as Orrec's reading and storytelling allowed him to be set free from his 'blindness', so here too, words allow Memer to escape the Ald invaders when necessary. In this manner, it seems that words also set the protagonists free.

Jackson's (1981:49-50) theory of vision and blindness in relation to consciousness and knowledge, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be applied to the novel's motifs in terms of hearing

and deafness:

> That which is not seen, that which is not said...is not 'known' and...remains as a threat [and so the] relation of the individual subject to the world, to others,...ceases to be known or safe, and problems of apprehension (in the sense of perceiving and of fearing) become central to the modern fantastic.

The motif of hearing appears after the Waylord briefly questions Memer about her knowledge of the room and the books there, and she eventually reveals to him that some of the books in the dark end of the room used to scare her. The Waylord finds this interesting and presses her for an explanation. She admits that they scared her because 'they made noises' and she roughly gesticulates towards the shadow end of the room to indicate which book(s) she is referring to (Le Guin 2006:29). In this case, a hint of the supernatural is attached to the motif of hearing. Memer only reveals this information reluctantly and out of respect for the Waylord himself, and she is surprised that she has actually done so: 'Why was I talking about that book? I never thought about it, I didn't want to think about it, let alone talk about it' (Le Guin 2006:29). The fact that Memer does not want to think or even talk about this shows that she, like Orrec, does not want to face the truth of what power might be responsible for this or might lie within her. The first time she hears the book groan, she is only six years old. In her reliving of the incident she recalls how she only went into the shadow end of the room in order to test her own courage:

> I wanted to make myself brave. I dared myself to go all the way to the shadow end. I went, keeping my eyes on the floor right before my feet....Then I sidled over to the bookcase, still keeping my eyes down, seeing only that it was low and built into the rock wall, and reached out to touch a book bound in shabby brown leather. When I touched it, it groaned aloud. I pulled back my hand and stood there. I told myself I hadn't heard anything. (Le Guin 2006:31)

The motifs of vision and hearing present in this extract, function to show how Memer is trying to block out the reality of her situation by not wanting to look at the book(s) or by trying to pretend she has not heard one of them groaning. Memer feels ashamed by her lack of courage since it means that she will not be brave enough to 'kill the Alds when [she grows]

up' (Le Guin 2006:31). Furthermore, she acknowledges that she has never had the courage to reveal her fear to the Waylord, and she realises this has deeply affected her: 'Fear breeds silence, and then the silence breeds fear, and I let it rule me. Even there, in that room, the only place in the world where I knew who I was. I wouldn't let myself guess who I might become' (Le Guin 2006:32). Just like Orrec, Memer is afraid to allow herself to contemplate her true power or identity out of fear.

Jackson's idea that 'that which is not said' can be threatening can also be applied to the idea of silence in the novel. At times, silence functions as form of 'blindness', as a negation of reality, throughout the novel. By remaining silent about the books, Memer refuses to acknowledge that there is a supernatural power connected to the books in the chamber even though there is strong evidence to suggest otherwise. Silence also serves as an important motif in the novel, despite its oppositional nature to the title of *Voices*. The silence in the novel functions on two levels: as an instrument of fear and oppression; or as a positive medium that promotes thought and introspection. It is through overcoming oppressive silence that Memer finally finds her 'voice' and thus a new identity, and that the citizens of Ansul can rise up in unison against the Alds.

The connection between self-imposed blindness and ignorance also appears in *Voices*, especially in relation to the invading Ald soldiers. When Gry and Orrec question the Waylord about the situation in Ansul shortly after their arrival, especially with regard to the destruction of its books and the preservation of a rumoured hidden library, the Waylord becomes defensive. He is always protective of the knowledge of the secret chamber, as well as of those for whom he holds the books for safekeeping. Shortly thereafter, when Memer asks the Waylord whether the torture he experienced at the hands of the Alds was indeed because there

are 'demonic' forces present in the house, he responds 'with a fierce look', defensive once again:

> "What they seek is theirs. It's in their hearts, not ours. This house hides no evil. They bring their darkness with them. They will never know what is in the heart of this house. They will not look, they will not see". (Le Guin 2006:90)

The Waylord describes the Alds' ignorance here metaphorically; they do not want to see the true power of the knowledge contained in books and the expansive learning to be gained from them. They feel safer distancing themselves from this form of knowledge and clinging to superstitions which stifle their development as a race, and which exclude them from meaningful interaction with other societies in the Western Shores. This also suggests to adolescent readers that ignorance stifles development, and that reading and learning are a form of empowerment.

The episode of the Oracle's answer to the Waylord's question about a planned uprising against the Alds is also significant in that it explores vision, hearing, and knowledge. After hearing the Waylord's account of the Ald invasion, their beliefs, and his consequent torture, Memer realises that at some point she will have to face her fears and learn more about the supposed 'demonic' power of her house if she is to overcome them:

> I had always been afraid of the far end of [the] long, strange room stretching off into darkness. I had kept away from the shadow end, turned my back on it, not thought about it, told myself, "That's something I'll understand later". Now it was later. Now I had to understand what my house was built on. (Le Guin 2006:91-92)

Memer realises that an understanding of her heritage and the house she belongs to is crucial if she is to uncover her true identity, power and potential, and if she is to contribute meaningfully to a rebellion against the Alds. And so when the time comes for Memer to accompany the Waylord to the secret chamber to address their question to the Oracle, she tries to gather her courage as best she can. This is the first time in a long time that Memer goes into the shadow end of the room and the reality of going there frightens her: 'The hair

on my neck and arms had been standing up ever since he began to speak of the books, the oracle books. I didn't want to see them. I didn't want to go where they were' (Le Guin 2006:182). Selective vision and deliberate ignorance come into play here in terms of Memer's fear. This touches again on Jackson's previously mentioned idea that the unseen or unknown is something that threatens the self. This concept of the unknown as a threat is relevant for adolescent readers, since the transition from adolescence into adulthood requires confrontation with the unknown, and even with what adolescents have silenced about themselves, if development and growth are to occur.

After making their way into the darkness of the cave at the end of the room, the Waylord says a brief blessing and goes on to ask his question about the success of a rebellion against the Alds:

> "We come into darkness for light and into silence for words and into fear for blessing. Spirits of this place who made my people welcome, I ask an answer to my question. Will a rebellion, now, against the Alds who hold our city, fail or prevail?" (Le Guin 2006:185)

It is significant that the concepts of darkness/light, silence/words, and fear/blessing are used in the Waylord's blessing. This relates to Le Guin's Taoist notions of balance and shows the importance of this concept in her work. Elizabeth Cummins (1990:33) gives a concise description of the Taoist beliefs which Le Guin bases much of her work on:

> The yang-yin symbol is common to Taoism...and other ancient Chinese philosophies. Yin and yang are the primal forces out of whose interaction arises the world of being. The symbol expresses the operations of Tao, the inexhaustible, self-creating principle of the universe....But the symbol also suggests unity because both are held within the circle's boundary and in each is contained the germ of the other. All existence, from the cosmic to the personal, is seen as consisting of complementary opposites, such as being and becoming, duration and creation, essence and change, male and female.

The Taoist outlook thus promotes an idea of duality which is inclusive and essential to obtaining balance in life. It is only through entering the unknown darkness, the

uncomfortable silence, and overcoming fear, that knowledge or enlightenment will be attained. And so Memer and the Waylord patiently endure the darkness, silence, and uncertainty for some time before the Waylord finally leads Memer back to the bookshelves in the room to look for the Oracle's answer in one of the books. The Waylord searches the shelves and then notices that Memer is staring fixedly at a white book on one of the shelves, which she admits she saw 'instantly' (Le Guin 2006:187-188). When it is handed to Memer, she is immediately able to read its answer, with the Oracle voice speaking through her when she does: 'broken mends broken' (Le Guin 2006:188). Even though Memer has been dreading this moment, it confirms to her that she does indeed have the supernatural ability to channel the Oracle, and this scares her immensely. However, because the Waylord admits that the power also scares him, they are able to find some solace in their shared burden. The motifs of silence and darkness in this episode function to reveal their fears, and this demonstrates that they are indeed courageous in confronting a power they do not truly understand. It also shows their commitment to the cause of freedom. Interestingly, the Oracle's meaning in this passage (and throughout the novel) is opaque and must be discovered:

> I had wanted to ask why the oracle couldn't speak plainly, why it couldn't just say *Don't resist*, or *Strike now*, instead of cryptic images and obscure words. After looking at the stars, that seemed a foolish question. The oracle was not giving orders but just the opposite: inviting thought. Asking us to bring thought to mystery. The result might not be very satisfactory but it was probably the best we could do. (Le Guin 2006:194)

What seems to be suggested here is that freedom can only be gained through introspective thought and interrogation, and is not attainable through a simple answer. The Oracle does not simply issue orders which can be blindly followed or defied. Rather it seems to elude being biased towards any one particular faction, and so its mysterious messages are always inclusive and instructive. Symbolic yet again of Le Guin's Taoist beliefs, balance and inclusion, rather than division or favouritism, are

encouraged through the Oracle's messages.

After the rebellion breaks out, the people of Ansul eventually gather at the courtyard of the House of Galvamand, seeking shelter as well as the Waylord's guidance. When the Waylord emerges, he takes Memer up to a broad step overlooking the courtyard and verbally challenges Iddor, son of Ioratth, who has gathered his Ald troops around the courtyard and who has, along with his priests, risen up against the Gand, his own father, in order to seize power for himself. The Waylord proceeds to accuse him of ousting his father and of deceitfully seizing control for his own gain. He then produces a small book he has brought with him from the secret chamber and holds it out in public for all to see, and challenges Iddor to read it. Since Iddor is afraid of books and cannot read, the Waylord suggests that it will be read to him instead, and it seems he hands the book to Memer to read. Once again, the Oracle channels its power through Memer, and she describes what she feels:

> I cannot truly say what it was I heard, nor can anyone who was there that morning, but it seemed to me that a voice cried out, a loud, strange voice that rang out all around us, over the forecourt where the fountain leapt, and rang echoing off the walls of Galvamand. Some say it was the book itself that cried out, and I think it was. Some say that it was I, that it was my voice. I know I read no words in that book – I could not see its pages. I don't know whose voice it was that cried out. I don't know that it was not mine.
> The words I heard were, *Let them set free*!
> But others heard other words. And some heard only the crashing water of the fountain in the great silence of the crowd.
> What Iddor heard I don't know. (Le Guin 2006:261-262)

Hearing is shown to be subjective here, almost untrustworthy or questionable, but it seems to function in such a way that the message given is the one needed by the particular hearer. It is a tailor-made message of sorts, pointing out the idea that perspective affects outlook. Only through listening to the message given them by the power of the Oracle will the people of Ansul and the Ald soldiers be able to move forward from the stalemate they have created for themselves during the seventeen-year invasion. This concept is ultimately didactic in nature

and can be applied to adolescent rebellion. It shows that perspective is important, and somewhat subjective, and that negotiation and a successful outcome can only come about if both parties in a dispute are willing to listen to one another.

Like Memer, Orrec comes to play a pivotal role in the freeing of Ansul from Ald oppression. Orrec's true gift as a storyteller seems finally to come to the fore. When speaking of his conversations with the Gand to the Waylord, Orrec explains how he is confused about the fact that the Gand sees him as an advisor of sorts, whom he has taken into his confidence, even though Orrec is a 'heathen'. The Waylord replies that this is probably because Orrec is 'a maker' and therefore 'a truth-speaker and a seer', and that he is also a 'good listener' (Le Guin 2006:145). Orrec objects to this last part by simply saying he is merely 'silent' when he listens (Le Guin 2006:145). This is significant because it shows a positive facet to silence, that of respect. Orrec is always willing to listen, and hearing is again shown to be an important motif which leads to thought, introspection, and mediation. This also suggests that listening is a vital skill in growth and development, and an aid in the decision-making process. As an outsider capable of truly listening, Orrec is able to contemplate the multiple viewpoints which make up a situation, and to better negotiate both sides of a dispute in an impartial manner. This is what makes Orrec invaluable as a mediator in the rebellion that follows.

Nevertheless, Orrec constantly questions his role in the rebellion to come. He is initially pressurised into considering participating in it by a man called Desac, a former soldier of Ansul, who is now a slave in the house of Gand Ioratth. Desac is certain that the people of Ansul will find inspirational courage in Orrec's storytelling and singing. Desac tries to manipulate Orrec into helping overthrow the Alds by saying that 'Blessed Ennu' must have sent him to Ansul to help the people in their 'hour of need' (Le Guin 2006:168). Orrec,

however, realises that he will be drawn into a dispute of which he is not truly a part. He has no desire to take part in a revolt. Desac fails to 'hear' Orrec in this matter and tries to pressurise Orrec by asking: '"Who can better call the people to arms than a great maker?"' (Le Guin 2006:168). Desac refuses to hear Orrec's protests on the matter and insists that as a soldier he knows what a voice like Orrec's is capable of doing in times like these (Le Guin 2006:169). He is adamant that Orrec is meant to play a central role in the rebellion and refuses to hear otherwise. The ideas inherent in this passage seem to suggest that stories are vulnerable to appropriation and/or misappropration. Byrne (2000:237), in her article 'Truth and Story: History in Ursula K. Le Guin's Short Fiction and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission', points out that 'accounts [of events i.e. stories] are inscribed with textuality and mediacy that make them susceptible to...being co-opted in the interests of power and ideology'. On the one hand, Orrec's works focus on the ideas of liberty and freedom and can thus be effectively appropriated (that is, set aside on purpose) for use in spurring the people of Ansul to a rebellion and uprising. On the other hand, Orrec's works can also be misappropriated (that is, put to wrong use or used dishonestly) by Desac for his own desires. He wants to manipulate Orrec to his own ends, and this is a reflection of what can happen in the desire to construct a 'value system' underpinned by political ideology (Byrne 2000:245).

Desac goes on to divulge his plan to overthrow the Alds to the Waylord, explaining that his men are ready, but that all they need in order to overcome all the '"years of tyranny, enslavement, insult, defilement, [and] rage"' is '"a voice to summon"' them (Le Guin 2006:170-171). The Waylord asks Desac if he is then at least willing to 'hear' the answer to the question he will take to the Oracle that night about the success of a rebellion against the Alds (Le Guin 2006:171). Desac hesitantly agrees to this, only to dismiss the Oracle's

message of ‘broken mends broken’ (Le Guin 2006:188) later on, as it holds no obvious or immediate meaning for him. Throughout this conversation, listening as a form of respect is hinted at. It is evident that Orrec feels doubt about helping Ansul and being pressurised to take sides in the rebellion. Ironically, this doubt is what makes him an ideal mediator because he treats both the Waylord (and the people of Ansul) and the Gand Ioratth with respect and understanding. But this is also why he finds it difficult to contemplate getting involved, as he does not want to impose a solution, nor does he want to have to choose between the two men, or offend either of them. Desac, in his eagerness to raise a rebellion, is the one who prefers to ignore expressions of doubt or messages of caution. It is he who ultimately dies in the fire set by himself and his rebels in the Alds’ tent, and perhaps this serves as a warning to listen to and heed words of doubt and caution before acting impulsively without enough forethought. Perhaps this also suggests that gifts need not be hidden but should not be used carelessly either.

Shortly after these events, however, Orrec finally decides to gather his courage and to publicly recite a well-known heroic tale of Ansul to its citizens after all, an act which could have severe repercussions for both him and them. When the crowd enthusiastically gather in the market square and they hear Orrec’s intended topic, they begin to send up what Memer describes as a ‘great, strange sound,...a kind of moaning roar both of joy and of grief’ (Le Guin 2006:206). This does not deter Orrec, despite the threat of the Ald soldiers standing guard, and he continues to recite the tale. Memer is swept away by the tale, just as the crowd is, and she describes how it makes her feel: ‘The story, the words, were so dear to me, and I had only known them in silence, in the secret, in the hidden room, alone. Now I heard them spoken aloud among a great crowd of my people, in the heart of my city, under the open sky’ (Le Guin 2006:206). The idea of a need for a unified identity is shown through Orrec’s telling

of the ancestral tale which ultimately serves to unite the crowd as a people with a shared heritage. When the tale finally ends, the crowd is silent initially because they have been so mesmerised by Orrec's recounting of it. However, the crowd are so moved at what they have heard that they start chanting and singing various praises to Orrec, calling out to the gods that they worship. To acknowledge their gods so openly and to chant in unison is risky because they could be punished at any moment for this by the Ald soldiers, especially since the Alds forbid the worship of the 'heathen' gods. Orrec eventually raises his voice above the crowd and asks them to sing his poem 'Caspro's Hymn' with him. The crowd willingly do so and Memer observes how overwhelming it is when the 'thousands of voices' join together in harmony (Le Guin 2006:207). This is what finally spurs the Ald soldiers on to disperse the crowds, and then Orrec, Gry and Memer quietly slip away from the action and return to Galvamand.

In this incident, concepts central to Poetry Therapy can be seen through Orrec's use of his poem 'Caspro's Hymn'. Poetry Therapy 'involves the use of the language arts in therapeutic capacities,...the purview of poetry therapy including bibliotherapy, narrative psychology, metaphor, storytelling, and journal writing' (Mazza 2003:Introduction). Poetry attempts to condense, artistically, many meanings into a shortened format, and in so doing, to evoke an emotional response of some sort in the reader. It is because of its shortened format that it is a more readily accessible form of literature. In *Gifts*, it is Orrec's mother that introduces him and Gry to the notion of stories and poetry, thus passing on a love for this in both of them. It is this aspect in himself – his propensity for writing, reading and storytelling – that inspires Orrec eventually to leave the Uplands in order to spread his knowledge. Poetry (especially lyrical poetry of the type found in songs) and other forms of literature, also play an important part in the notion of resistance against oppression. This is because 'the language skills of

rhetoric together with armed struggle are essential to an oppressed people's resistance to domination and oppression and to an organized liberation movement' (Harlow 1987:xv). Poetry, in evoking an emotional response, is able to motivate people on a deep, psychological level. Moreover, on a political or communal level, poetry can be seen 'as a part of the cultural institutions and historical existence of a people' (Harlow 1987:33). It is Orrec's rendition of the local, well-known heroic tale of Ansul in *Voices* that leads him to inspire the suppressed masses to use their voices to sing his well-known poem/hymn, and to gather their courage in order to revolt against the Alds. According to Elias Khouri (1974, quoted in Harlow 1987:34), poetry's role in resistance is relevant because it is an important and effective 'means of political mobilization', and also 'because it sustains, within the popular memory, national continuity'. Poetry and storytelling are thus able to function as a record of the culture of a people, and this aspect can be used to spur them into action, under the power of a unified identity. This episode demonstrates the power of words, of voice and of listening, which function in conjunction to unite people, to give them faith, and, in this case, to implant the courage needed for a rebellion.

Desac is right in his estimation that a voice is needed to unite the people in rebellion against the Alds. However, because he acts impulsively and decides to set fires at the last minute, he pays the ultimate price for the rebellion. Orrec, in finally deciding to speak up for the oppressed, takes on a role of responsibility that he may not truly want, but which is expected from someone with his reputation and standing. As a public poet and storyteller, he has a moral duty to stand up against oppression. Perhaps if the rebels' fires had not been set so soon after Orrec's speech, the rebellion might not have been so violent in nature. Ansul suffers many casualties as a result of the fire. If peaceful protest had been allowed to take its course under the guidance of Orrec, then the rebellion may have been more temperate. And so from

this episode it becomes more apparent that with extreme actions come extreme consequences.

Iddor, the son of Gand Ioratth, is also an important character when it comes to the concept of rebellion. The incident of Iddor's overthrowing and imprisoning his own father raises the question of whether outright rebellion is as hard as absolute obedience. Iddor has grudgingly been obedient to his father for years, despite what he regards as his father's lenience towards Ansul throughout the invasion. He also holds extreme religious views which he manipulates and uses to his advantage when necessary. Iddor seems to have eventually foregone absolute obedience to his father in favour of outright rebellion against him. This is somewhat similar to the normally obedient Orrec's rebelling against his father in *Gifts*, when Orrec finally decides to remove the blindfold his father has imposed on him. However, Orrec's rebellion in this matter is not nearly as extreme as Iddor's rebellion against the Gand because it does not lead to direct violence or to physical harm of others. During the fire in the Ald tent, Gand Ioratth is severely burnt but survives, and Iddor, seeing a chance to seize power, secretes his father in a back room of the Council House. After this he is able to declare power for himself, and to unleash the hatred he has for Ansul and its culture of reading and books. However, the truth about his mistreatment of his father and his unjust seizure of power comes out, and the Ald soldiers turn against him and his priests. Despite a brief escape, Iddor is finally found and imprisoned, and is eventually sent away to his desert homeland in shame. This sequence of events suggests that absolute obedience is difficult because it is unrealistic and unsustainable. However, it also suggests that outright rebellion is undesirable, since this is what leads to Iddor's downfall. He also symbolises the idea that extremity in any form has severe consequences. His reluctant obedience and his extreme rebellion are opposed to the more temperate kind of duty and rebellion that Le Guin advocates through her protagonists in the trilogy. For Le Guin, both duty and rebellion are necessary at times, but must be carried out

with forethought, and must ultimately be productive, not destructive in nature. Once again, the Taoist notion of balance seems to be the key to harmony here.

Memer recounts how Orrec later tells her and the Waylord about the speech he gave after freeing the Gand from Iddor's imprisonment. Orrec only gives the speech after the crowd insists he speaks to them in place of the Gand. On realising this, Orrec says to Ioratth: '"If I speak to them, I speak for them"' (Le Guin 2006: 275). This is his way of asserting that a change in power is taking place and that the Gand needs to consider that the people of Ansul are once again united, and that they have reclaimed their identity as the city's rightful citizens. Orrec claims that he has forgotten much of what he said in his speech, mostly because he 'had no idea what he would say from one word to the next' (Le Guin 2006:275). This indicates that he speaks spontaneously and from the heart. However, Memer believes she knows what he really said as some of the people there later write down his words:

> "People of Ansul, we have seen the water of the dead fountain run. We have heard the voice that was silent speak. The oracle bade us set free. And so we have done this day. We have set free the master, we have set free the slave". (Le Guin 2006:275)

The idea of fear relating to silence which must then be overcome through the use of voice is also touched on in this passage. The voice referred to here also symbolises a newfound identity for the people of Ansul.

The idea of silence in relation to oppression is common to both feminist and postcolonial ideas whereby the female or the colonized can be seen as complicit in their oppression through their silence. This is because 'othering is a common fate for women and the colonized' (Neimneh 2014:50) and so, steeped in the oppression of this discrimination, they struggle to find a 'voice' to protest against it. The well-known feminist scholar, Helene

Cixous (1981:43) equates being silenced with being 'decapitated' – women and similarly the unrepresented colonized 'have no choice other than to be decapitated,...[that is, to lose their tongues] to complete silence, [to be] turned into automatons'. Moreover, being silenced means that the oppressed conforms 'to the expectations of the master's discourse' and so they are 'deprive[d] of agency' and 'objectified' (Neimneh 2014:53).

The power of the oppressor's discourse and its effect on the oppressed can be seen in Memer's attitude to her hybrid identity and its meaning with regard to her power of channelling the voice of the Oracle:

> 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 her 'beloved' chamber, because she fears that perhaps the Alds' discourse about its harbouring demons may be true, especially for her, since she is 'an Ald too'. Memer's emotional outburst could also suggest that perhaps she recognizes and has learnt to accept her hybridity or liminality, 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 the 'objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction'. 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, the '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 emphasize 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. Their discourse in this instance seems to have been successful. Its influence 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') and asks her if she knows any girls: '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). Thus Memer, and the citizens of Ansul, must work to overcome the psychological damage inflicted on them via the Alds' discourse. Only by overcoming fear, raising up their voices, and acting in unison, can the Ansul citizens be freed from oppression.

Orrec points out that much evidence has been given to Ansul and the Alds pointing to a higher power that bids them free themselves from a mutual form of enslavement – the Ansul people from physical and spiritual enslavement, and the Alds from fear and superstition. Moreover, this ties in with the concept that, according to the postcolonial poet and politician, Aimé Césaire (1972, quoted in Gandhi 1998:137-138), 'oppressors are themselves the

victims of their own modes of oppression'. Additionally, 'colonisation works to *decivilise* the coloniser, to *brutalise* him..., to degrade him, to awaken him to buried instincts, to covetousness, violence, race hatred, and moral relativism' (Césaire (1972), quoted in Gandhi 1998:138). This description of the 'oppressed' oppressor can be applied successfully to the Alds – they feel the yoke of their own oppression on the Ansul people because they have become imprisoned in Ansul itself. They act out of violence and fear. They are cut off from their homeland and their women. They are reliant on the citizens of Ansul for their resources. And they have no intention of getting to know these or of sending settlers (citizens from their own desert homelands) to properly colonise the city. They have thus become victims of their own actions. This idea of victimhood is clearly demonstrated in the Ald adolescent, Simme, who feels trapped by the situation he finds himself in as an invader of Ansul:

> [Simme] went on about girls, just talking about his daydreams I suppose, and began to say some things that made me feel myself getting red in the face and restless. I said in a flat voice, "I don't know any girls". That shut him up for a while. He sighed and scratched his groin and finally said, "I hate it here. I want to go home". (Le Guin 2006:136-137)

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

> 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 2006:352-253)

Tirio inhabits a Third Space, just like 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; Bhabha's emphasis).

Here Bhabha advocates that postmodern societies 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 idea of Ansul and the Alds being mutually enslaved, and the consequent need to free one another is reiterated in Orrec's recital of the heroic tale of *Chamhan* to the people of Ansul after their uprising against the Alds. In the tale, the hero, Hamneda, frees a tyrant from captivity saying: '"Give liberty to have liberty! Set free to be free!"' (Le Guin 2006:309). The only way to implement freedom and a new cooperative relationship between the two sides, is to heed what has been seen, to heed what has been heard, and to act on the message proffered.

The concept of liberty can be applied to the parent/teen relationship, whereby parents can be viewed as the 'colonizers' of their children. Once children become adolescents and start to test boundaries and undergo identity transformations, both parties must learn to be open to compromise and negotiation. If this does not happen, then adolescent rebellion is likely to take place, and, as demonstrated in the novel, extreme rebellion (as embodied by Iddor) does not bring about constructive change. The identity transformation undergone by Memer in *Voices* is more constructive in nature, and is essentially her journey towards freedom. Only in being able to recreate an identity for herself in the present, through enlarging her self-knowledge/perception, 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.

Chapter 4 – Useful Obedience:

Self-knowledge, Trust, and Story in *Powers*

Freedom is largely a matter of seeing that there are alternatives (Le Guin 2007:16).

In Ursula Le Guin's *Powers* (2007), the theme of enslavement is much more obvious than in the previous two novels, *Gifts* (2004b) and *Voices* (2006). The enslavement is also more disturbingly complete in that the impulse to rebellion is absent. According to Foucault in 'The Subject and Power' (1982), knowledge is intrinsically tied to the concept of power. This notion can be seen in this chapter, which aims to explore both knowledge and power in relation to Gavir, the adolescent protagonist of *Powers*. Foucault also considers the concept of what he terms 'disciplinary power' in 'The Subject and Power'. In it, Foucault (1982:781) posits that there is an everyday form of power 'which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him'. This is relevant for Gavir, who has the identity of a slave imposed on him from an early age. Furthermore, this form of disciplinary power creates subjects out of individuals in two ways, in that they are 'subject to someone else by control and dependence' and that they are 'tied to [their] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge', with 'both meanings suggest[ing] a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to' (Foucault 1982:781). This concept of power seems to suggest that there are both external (authoritative) and internal (psychological) forces which function to create, and, more specifically, regulate, the identity of an individual, as discussed in relation to *Powers*.

In *Powers,* at the start, Gavir is an 11-year old boy, and is a slave in the service of the great

Family of the House of Arcamand in the city of Etra. He and his 13-year old sister Sallo are brought up and educated with a handful of other young slaves, along with the Family's own children, the children of the House. In the novel, Gavir must learn to expand his perception and knowledge of the self so that he can overcome the institution of physical slavery. The motifs of trust and obedience are central to the novel and can be linked to notions of power/self-knowledge. The idea of Gavirs being 'blinded' by an overdeveloped sense of trust and obedience is what disempowers him, and what prevents him initially from escaping slavery. Moreover, Gavir seems to have been successfully regulated by disciplinary power in the novel, and this is what has allowed the Family to cultivate 'useful obedience' in him in the first place (Foucault (1977), cited in McHoul & Grace 1993:68). This chapter thus also focuses on the difference between trust and obedience, and attempts to show how this difference can suggest a way in which independence, and in turn, a sense of self-empowerment, can be cultivated in adolescents.

Just as Orrec and Memer provide a metanarrative of their experiences in *Gifts* and *Voices*, so too does Gavir in *Powers*. In Chapter 2, Gavir reveals that he is writing this story for his wife, explaining to her that by looking back at his childhood in Etra, he feels as if he is transported back there, seeing it from his childlike perspective:

> I fall back into it and see it as I saw it them, from inside and from below, with nothing to compare it to, and as if it were the only way things could possibly be. Children see the world that way. So do most slaves. Freedom is largely a matter of seeing that there are alternatives. (Le Guin 2007:26)

The idea of vision and perception being linked to knowledge is evident here, and explains why Gavir sees his world in the way he does during his youth, without questioning his slavery or the Family he worked for. Moreover, in telling his own story, Gavir, as narrator, is alerting the reader to the idea of story, which also links to the liberating power of words as seen in *Gifts* and *Voices*. Thus the power of story is also explored in *Powers*.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979:135-169) outlines what he calls the 'four basic techniques of discipline', which can especially be seen in relation to institutions and the disciplinary power they exert over individuals in order to regulate their identity. The first technique is what Foucault (1979:141-149) refers to as 'the spatial distribution of individuals', in which members of a society are separated according to certain stages or functions in their lives. So, for example, children live in their parents' houses, and spend their weekdays in a classroom in a school, whilst the elderly might stay in a residential home. An example of this form of disciplinary power can be seen in *Powers*. Gavir and the other slaves all live in slave quarters determined by age and gender. Young boys are allowed to stay with the females in the House, until they become young adults and then they must move into the Barracks with the other slave men. The purpose of this spatial distribution seems to point towards control over sexuality, and aims to make individuals more disciplined so that they will be of more economic use.

The second technique is designed to control certain activities that are seen as productive and to minimise so-called counterproductive activities (Foucault 1979:149-156). In *Powers*, depending on your status in the House you belong to, you are given a specific role to fulfil, and the fine-tuning of that role revolves around a strictly regulated timetable and routine.

The third technique of discipline is known as the organisation of training into segments designed in such a way that individuals will 'like their inescapable social destiny' (Foucault 1979:156-162). This system is designed so that 'individuals are carefully conditioned as they grow up so that they will be properly prepared to assume their assigned roles in life' (Latham 2004:137). This is exactly the case with Gavir, who is preassigned the role of being a slave-

teacher, who is encouraged to read and study, who is praised for his intellectual abilities, and who thus looks forward to this 'inescapable social destiny', and who does not question it. Gavir is also strictly forbidden from playing at 'soldiers', since this is a role he and the other slaves would never be allowed to assume.

The fourth technique is one which involves a 'mechanized society', so that 'an assembly-line method' of production becomes the norm (Latham 2004:144). An example of this is the aforementioned roles that are assigned to slaves for life and these roles are imposed early and accepted without question. In this way, a slave carries out certain duties to complement the other roles his fellow slaves fill. Another example of this technique is the previously mentioned system of the 'selling' of slave babies to other Houses (see Chapter 1). As soon as a slave girl becomes pregnant (usually due to a sexual encounter with a male of the slave-owning class), arrangements are made to sell the baby to another house as soon as it is born. And so new slave children are acquired from different Houses, and the resultant babysitting duties are then distributed amongst the slave-women of those Houses. These are just some examples of how disciplinary power can be shown to regulate society in the novel.

Trites examines the concept of regulating (authoritative) bodies exerting an external control over individuals in relation to the adolescent novel in her critical work, *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000). Trites (2000:22-23) argues that young adult novels usually show 'the ways that teenagers are affected by government policies or are socially constructed by identity politics, including race, gender, and class', and that nearly every adolescent novel 'assesses some aspect of the interaction between the individual adolescent and the institutions that shape her or him'. This chapter focuses on the idea of identity formation, taking into consideration Foucault's notions of external and

internal forms of disciplinary power, and Trites's idea of the adolescent's being socially constructed by various institutions. In *Powers*, the central motif of slavery best demonstrates how identity is imposed through disciplinary power, and thus it is an appropriate novel in which to explore Foucault's and Trites's concepts.

At first, Gavir is happy to belong to the House of Arcamand despite his slave status, as he feels gratitude that he and his sister are well fed, educated and clothed. Gavir, who enjoys reading and studying, is in his element as he is being trained as a teacher, following in the footsteps of his slave teacher Everra, whom he reveres. The motif of vision, especially the sight of prophecy, is important in Gavir's development of perception and knowledge, and this becomes apparent from the opening of the novel. Here, Gavir and Sallo are engaged in a dialogue in which Sallo advises him not to talk about what he has just 'seen' (Le Guin 2007:3). Sallo is referring to Gavir's supernatural gift of foresight in which he has visions of the future, which he ironically refers to as 'remembering'. Sallo warns Gavir not to tell people about the vision he has just had of an invasion of their city, Etra. This is because he does not know exactly when it will take place (a typical problem with his visions), but more importantly, because the people of Etra do not approve of supernatural power, and the revelation of this power could endanger Gavir's life. Sallo and Gavir are Marsh people, originally members of a tribal grouping known for having powers of second sight and prophecy. Sallo and Gavir were abducted from the Marshes when they were very young, and sold into slavery in the House of Arcamand, which belongs to the prominent Arca family in Etra. As previously mentioned, many slaves are owned by various Houses in the city, and slavery is thus a commonplace institution amongst its people. And so initially, both Gavir and Sallo loyally carry out their service to the Family of the House of Arcamand. But Gavir's life is not an easy one since he is treated with jealousy by a fellow slave boy, Hoby, who is in fact

a half-brother to Torm and Yaven Arca, true sons of the Father of the House. As the novel develops, Gavir starts to discover that his trust in and compliance with slavery are challenged, and he eventually escapes the House when Sallo is killed by Torm and/or Hoby. This spurs Gavir on into a quest for a search for freedom, and for a place in which he feels he can belong.

Foucault (1979, quoted in Milner & O'Byrne 2002:23) maintains that the West has developed ways of securing power over society 'by the use of well-guarded expertise that perpetuates class divisions and influences morality and the law', a process that 'involves persuading people, from a stance of benevolence, to internalise and maintain their own subordinate positions and identities, and invites them to police each other in this regard'. Thus, any discourse can exert power over the lives of individuals to such an extent that it may determine their perception of self and of life as a whole. This concept is applicable to all three protagonists in the *Annals of the Western Shore*. In *Gifts*, Orrec and Gry feel overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them due to the discourse of duty that abounds in the Uplands – they are expected to use their powers according to how they are used by their parents or have been used by their ancestors in the past. In *Voices*, Memer is subject to the Alds' discourse of the 'evil' inherent in books, in the process of reading, and in ritual of any kind relating to the gods of Ansul. She is also, in turn, subject to the Ansulian discourse on the Alds themselves – which affects her personally since she is half Ald. In *Powers*, Gavir (along with the majority of the Etran population) is subject to the discourse of slavery as an acceptable condition, and he sees it as a positive duty (especially with regard to his own House). Moreover, Gavir sees himself as privileged because he belongs to the House of Arcamand. This idea is reinforced in his mind by the lower standards of living experienced by slaves of other Houses in Etra.

An example of Foucault's 'internalised' and 'benevolent' influence of power in terms of regulating behaviour can also be seen in Gavir's slave-teacher, Everra. One day, Everra talks to Gavir about loyalty. It is ironic that Everra talks to Gavir about loyalty because, as a slave, he has no real reason to be loyal to the Family. Everra tries to explain that Gavir should be loyal precisely because the family-less Gavir has lived in the House 'as a member of a family' and has been 'taken into the heart of a great household and given all [he needs] – shelter and food, great Ancestors and a kindly Father to guide [him]' (Le Guin 2007:52-53). Furthermore, Gavir has been given 'nourishment for [his] spirit' through the learning that Everra has passed on to him (Le Guin 2007:53). Everra goes on to suggest that Gavir has been given a 'sacred gift', the gift of trust, because the Family 'trusts' both of them by allowing them to educate its children (Le Guin 2007:53). Everra believes he has earned this honour through his 'loyal effort to deserve it' (Le Guin 2007:53). Everra concludes his monologue by saying that when he dies, he hopes his reputation for loyalty will be sealed: '"I wish when I die that it might be said of me, "He never betrayed those who trusted him"' (Le Guin 2007:53). Everra's opinion in these matters is sincere, but his loyalty is misplaced. His perception that he and Gavir have been taken in and fed and looked after does not account for the fact that the Family has done this to have a productive slave workforce. It could be argued that the Family try to placate its slaves by treating them better than the other Houses treat their slaves and so lull them into a false sense of security, so that they come to trust the hand that enslaves them. This is an advantage because placated slaves are easier to control.

In the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1961:9) states that the colonized become the 'accomplice' of the colonizer because of being oppressed by the colonizer 'with their consent'. The allure of the discourse of the 'superior' culture of the colonizer and the pressure to integrate with this proves difficult for the

colonized to resist, and in this way they become complicit in their oppression. This postcolonial theory can be applied to the slaves' attitude in *Powers*, as demonstrated in Everra's speech here. What Everra refuses to acknowledge, however, is that the Family has only taken the family-less Gavir in because he was stolen away from his family in the Marshes to be sold into slavery in the first place. Furthermore, the fact that Everra feels he must 'earn' the honour of educating the Family's children, and that he must work to 'deserve it', serves to show how well the Family's placation has worked. Everra has indeed become blind to their situation in this way, and so remains 'usefully obedient' to the Family. Thus the power of discourse is made evident.

It is only through the process of reading, storytelling and the writing/reciting of poetry that the protagonists of *The Western Shore* are eventually able to externalise these discourses, and to re-evaluate them for themselves. This is part of the theory behind narrative therapy. Narrative therapy theorists Milner and O'Byrne (2002:22) posit that '[b]eliefs about the "stable self" impede the process of exploring new possibilities' and that if people insist on imposing these concepts of the self, then they will be unable 'to create alternative selves that are empowering'. In order to overcome their notions of self, the protagonists must embark on a journey of 're-storying' in order to change their identity, and thus, in turn, free themselves from the discourses which have enslaved them in some way. We shall see how Gavir embodies this idea through his storytelling in *Powers*.

The system of slavery in Etra is a complex one, since it is an established institution that has existed for a long time, and has come to be viewed as an acceptable institution in its own right. Throughout *Powers*, Le Guin seems to suggest that slavery can never be justified, because it is always a detractive and destructive system. It is Gavir's overinflated sense of

loyalty towards the Family which blinds him to the overall reality of his situation, which is that he is completely subject to their every whim and desire. Unfortunately, this naive viewpoint, if left unexamined and unquestioned, will never result in freedom or in a reciprocal relationship of power. Foucault (1982:790) suggests that subjection in slavery is a different form of power altogether; in fact, he does not see the master/slave relationship as a power relationship per se:

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint). Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive..., but a much more complicated interplay. In this game, freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power....The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit cannot, therefore, be separated. The crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude (how could we seek to be slaves?). At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance [opposition] of the will and the intransigence [obstinacy] of freedom [i.e. resistance].

For Foucault, the notion of freedom is based on the ability and will to resist power, which is not an option under physical enslavement. And since power and freedom, in his view, must function in conjunction with one another, the relationship of master and slave is one of constraint, which ultimately leaves the slave powerless. Where there is no freedom, there is no power. The slave has no choice but to comply, or suffer punishment or death. Moreover, if slaves do not choose to resist their masters, they then play 'a significant role in the functioning of [the] power which acts upon them' (Foucault (1977), quoted in Hook 2007:79). They are thus compliant in their oppression, a notion which will be explored more fully later on.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault puts forward the belief that power works creatively, enabling us to become 'certain kinds of people', and so it does not limit liberty or

restrain the subject (May 2011:76). Power operates in two ways in order to do this: firstly, 'it trains our bodies to be oriented toward particular kinds of behaviour', and secondly, 'it makes us think of ourselves in certain kinds of ways' (May 2011:76). So power thus regulates us through discipline, in actions and behaviour, and affects the way we conceive of ourselves psychologically. Our actions and perception are greatly influenced, in fact even moulded, by power. In *Powers*, Gavir and his fellow slaves are brought up to feel a loyalty towards their House Masters, and to perform their tasks dutifully and without question. They believe strongly in who they have been made to believe they are, based on their duty and status in life. There is very little evidence in the novel to demonstrate any of the slaves' resisting this way of life in Etra. When the city of Etra is besieged by an invading army, the slaves are locked away in allocated compounds during the fighting. They grumble and complain about this situation, but take no action against it. Their main complaint seems to be that they are not allowed to fight for the city but are locked up. Only one character, Tadder, who has been involved in a slave rebellion in another district in the past, talks of an opportunity to revolt against the masters during the siege. But it is little more than talk. This seems to suggest that disciplinary power has regulated the slaves' behaviour successfully, and that they are subject to constraint, and so lack any real freedom.

The slaves of Etra are restrained in the instance of the siege by being physically imprisoned in the barracks, but also by the threat of death from their masters if they do not comply with city laws. Therefore, it could be argued that they are powerless and have been successfully regulated through Foucault's notions of disciplinary power and so fail to resist their masters. However, Foucault's ideas of power are more complex than this. He (1977, quoted in Hook 2007:79) explains that 'all power-relations, no matter how unequal and/or hierarchical, can be promulgated on both sides from above and below, [and so] all power-relations...may be

treated as constraining on both sides'. I think this is evident in *Powers*, in which slavery is presented as an ambiguous system in terms of power relationships. The slaves also hold a certain amount of power over their masters as a necessary workforce and as productive assets. However, because they do not choose to resist their masters, one could argue that in relation to Foucault's view on power relations, there is no true power relationship here, since there is no resistance, and thus there is no freedom: 'without...forms of contestation and struggle there [is] only complete domination, subservience and obedience' (Foucault (1982), quoted in Hook 2007:84). This can also relate to the Alds as colonizers and the citizens of Ansul as the colonized in *Voices*. The citizens do not dare resist the Alds for many years, during which time they are severely oppressed.

In *Powers*, Le Guin shows the operation of both restraint (which is more physical) and constraint (which is more psychological). For Foucault (1979), disciplinary power in a society functions by causing people to 'think of themselves as psychological beings' (May 2011:77). As a result of this, people would rather question themselves than assign any discontent they may harbour to the operation of social or political factors (May 2011:77). In this instance, power functions through constraint, not restraint, and so is still limiting in its function (May 2011:77). This is an effective way of creating inner 'conformity', and it successfully curbs 'social resistance or experimentation with other forms of living' (May 2011:77). In this manner, constraint ensures the desire for 'that which is considered appropriate to desire', and because of this 'one does not even consider alternatives to what are presented as the available social options' (May 2011:77). This is exemplified in Gavir's viewpoint. Although one could argue he is 'restrained' due to slavery, he is complicit in his slavery at the same time through his pride in his status as a future educator in the House, and in the overarching sense of loyalty he feels towards it, and so constraint certainly functions here too. He has been regulated to feel acceptance of his position as slave and value the sense

of duty this imposes on him. In this way, power operates on a multitude of levels and thus 'inhabits our daily practices, moulding us into particular kinds of compliant beings' (May 2011:78).

Compliance is not always desirable nor productive for the individual, and so eventually, resistance must come into play. According to Foucault (1982, quoted in Hook 2007:84), 'power-relations remain ever fraught with resistance; there is always a strategic possibility for loosening the hold of a given relation of control'. This idea is relevant and applicable to adolescent rebellion. It is only through rebelling against various authoritative systems that adolescents are able to test their own power in the world, as part of defining who they are in it. *Powers* seems to strongly suggest this to its readers.

Gavir also initially feels content to be part of the House of Arcamand because, unlike other Houses, this one takes pains to educate its young slaves along with the Family children. Gavir is a keen student who enjoys reading and History and tends to do well in school, a fact that annoys Hoby, a son of the Father of the House by a slave woman. Since schooling is not Hoby's strong point, he constantly bullies Gavir. On one particular occasion, the slightly older Hoby is placed under Gavir's supervision for some recital work and Hoby resents this and starts picking on him. Hoby calls Gavir 'Master's pet', the meaning of which Gavir is able to garner clearly: 'Master's pet meant today, sneak, traitor. And Hoby said it with real hatred' (Le Guin 2007:13). Immediately we see tension arising between Hoby and Gavir, a foreshadowing of the strife that is to come between them in the future. And Hoby's word choice is especially hurtful for Gavir, who is sincere, loyal, and hard-working. Hoby's accusation that Gavir is a 'sneak' leads Gavir to think of a former slave/housemaid of the house, Rif, who 'tattled' on others in an effort to 'gain favour' with the Mother of the house

(Le Guin 2007:13). However, the Mother reprimanded Rif, telling her she did not 'like sneaks', and had her sold at the Market (Le Guin 2007:13). This is the only incident Gavir knows of when an adult slave has been sold from the House. Gavir deduces from this incident that there must be 'trust on both sides' (Le Guin 2007:13). Gavir thus believes that the only way for slaves to survive in the House and to avoid getting into trouble is to trust the Family, which will then trust them in turn. However, what Gavir fails to realise is that perhaps it is not really trust which is required, but rather obedience to the Family's idea of correct behaviour in their slaves. This is the first episode in which the motif of trust and its importance to Gavir is demonstrated.

The concept of betrayal is linked to the concepts of trust and loyalty, and Gavir's attitude to all three of these is seen in the incident in which he is called upon by Torm to play at soldiers, a game that is absolutely forbidden by the city, since slaves must never be given weapons of any kind, even toy weapons. Unfortunately, the Father of the House walks by as the boys are standing at a fountain in the courtyard trying to wash a wound which was accidentally inflicted on Hoby by Gavir. He thus discovers they have been playing at soldiers with toy weapons and he severely reprimands Torm for this. Torm lies and says that they were climbing trees and that Hoby fell, but Gavir is then questioned by the Father and cannot bring himself to lie about it. Gavir is relieved when the Father comes to reprimand them: 'I was not afraid of the Father, not as I was afraid of Hoby. I was in awe of him. I trusted him. He was completely powerful, and he was just' (Le Guin 2007:21). Gavir is completely trusting of the Father and this indicates that he has a very strong sense of loyalty towards the Family. When Gavir is ordered to burn the toy weapons, he reflects how having to do this, and having to confront the Father, makes him feel great dismay and shame:

> Being soldiers had been hard, frightening, glorious, we had been proud to be soldiers. I had loved my wooden sword. I used to go out alone to the cache to take

> it out and sing to it, smooth its rough splintery blade with a stone, polish it with grease saved from my dinner. But it was all lies. We had never been soldiers, only slaves. Slaves and cowards. I had betrayed our commander. I was sick with defeat and shame. (Le Guin 2007:23)

Gavir feels that by telling the Father the truth, he has had to 'betray' Torm. Gavir believes that Torm lies in order to save them all from being punished, but, as his fellow slave, Tib, rightly points out, he only lies to save himself from being punished. Still Gavir refuses to see this, and due to his inflated sense of loyalty, feels guilty for having told the truth. In choosing not to see the bigger picture in this instance, Gavir's loyalty functions in a negating way. He chooses to trust in and be loyal to his masters, even though they do not necessarily return the favour (initially Torm contemplates not taking responsibility for his actions in favour of having only the slave boys punished, an escape route his father offers him as way of testing his maturity and sense of responsibility). Gavir perhaps cannot face the fact that the Family may not truly care for their slaves' well-being, and are simply being law-abiding in the way they manage their slaves, even though they do seem to treat their slaves better than any of the other Houses in Etra. This episode demonstrates the gap in power between Torm, as a son of the Father, and Gavir, as a mere slave boy. Torm has the luxury of being able to lie, whilst Gavir could never risk such a punishable action. Another outcome of this episode which troubles Gavir is that when Hoby returns to school the next day, he treats everyone nicely except him: '[Hoby had] chosen to see me as an enemy, and was set against me from then on' (Le Guin 2007:25). This rivalry is what eventually goads Hoby to hunt down Gavir on a quest to punish him once he has escaped from Etra.

From this point on, Hoby keeps tormenting Gavir, picking on him, bullying him and threatening him whenever he gets a chance. On one particular occasion, he teases Gavir in the classroom, for which Everra prepares to punish Hoby. However, Torm intervenes and orders Everra to punish Gavir instead, because in his opinion, Gavir is guilty. Everra refuses to do

so, but Torm does not relent and works himself up into a raging fit (a trait that occurs in him occasionally) and he inadvertently lashes out against the young and innocent bystander, Miv :

> "I've had enough of this filth, this disobedience!" Torm cried in that thick shrill voice. He sounded like a crazy old woman. Maybe that was what made four-year-old Miv laugh. His little giggle rang out. Torm turned on the child and struck him a smashing blow to the head that threw him right off the bench against the wall. (Le Guin 2007:31)

Little Miv is fatally wounded and dies a few days later from the blow to his head. This incident gives Hoby the ammunition he needs to cause more trouble for the 'guilty' Gavir, and one evening, he and a group of older boys come to force Gavir to the well where they proceed to bully him and to dunk him into the water, head-first, as punishment:

> Whenever they brought me back up into the air, strangling and writhing and vomiting, Hoby would lean over me and say in a queer flat voice, "That's for betraying your master, you little traitor. For sucking up to that old teacher, you swamp rat. See how you like getting wet, swamp rat". And they would cram me down into the well again, and no matter how I tried to brace my arms against the stones and hold my head away from the water they would push me down and down till the water flooded into my nostrils and I gasped and choked, drowning. I don't know how many times they did it till I lost consciousness, but I must have gone limp at last, and that scared them into thinking I was dead. (Le Guin 2007:35)

Despite being badly wounded and half-drowned in the incident, Gavir never reveals who hurt him, abiding by the code of loyalty to fellow slaves. Gavir accounts for this behaviour by acknowledging that as slaves they 'lived in a complicity of silences' (Le Guin 2007:37). Silence in this instance indicates a negation of the truth, but it is for protective reasons. And when the Mother of the House demands to know who hurt him, Gavir 'keeps quiet' again by simply lying and saying he fell in the well by accident.

A few days later, when little Miv does eventually die, Gavir notes how everyone in Arcamand knows what had happened to Miv, and that the majority of the slaves are deeply troubled by it. Gavir observes how '[t]his time, it was the slaves who spoke, and the masters who kept silent' (Le Guin 2007:44). The motif of silence in both instances functions in two ways;

firstly, it indicates a negation of the truth, which may be too difficult to deal with, and thus it serves as a means of protection. In the first incident, Gavir covers up the truth in order to protect himself from further harm by Hoby, and in the second incident, the Family, protects Torm, by not acknowledging the truth of Miv's death. Secondly, the Family's silence could demonstrate a sense of guilt. Their protecting Torm is, however, a more insidious kind of action, since it denies the value of Miv's life, and, in turn, highlights that the Family does not truly care for its people. However, the Mother of the House does seem genuinely sorry for and distraught over what happened to Miv, since she spends much time caring for him when he is ill and tries her best to heal him. Gavir struggles with his feelings of loyalty towards the Family at this point. Eventually it turns out that the Family has suspected all along that it was Hoby who hurt Gavir and, because they know Torm inadvertently killed Miv, they decide that, as a form of punishment, neither boy should be sent to the country farm that summer with the rest of the children at Vente.

While the Family tries at least to make some amends for its actions, these steps seem to be comparatively weak in view of the consequences of the transgressions concerned – Gavir almost drowns, and Miv's life is violently taken. This sends out a message that the slaves are not treated as full human beings, and that their lives are expendable. This also seems to indicate that the system of slavery is a complex one, and is not one that works, even for the masters, whose loyalty will always be divided when it comes to the people/family in their households. And so there is much talk of 'blame and forgiveness' amongst the slaves of the household after this incident, which Gavir finds troubling. Moreover, this episode further demonstrates that Gavir abides by others' codes: first that of his masters, then that of the slaves.

The concept of loyalty is also explored further in terms of the code of silence amongst slaves

seen earlier on. The novel focuses on a communal type of loyalty which, as previously mentioned, is apparent amongst the slaves themselves. An example of this is when Gavir is sent to work in the College of Priests' Temple during the siege of Etra, with the other educated slaves. Here he becomes privy to much of their talk, and to his alarm he discovers that these slaves speak of their masters in a disloyal manner. Gavir attributes this to the fact that they have read the works of the 'modern writers', who eschew the oppression of slavery. This rebellious attitude is something Gavir could never contemplate at this stage:

> Now I understand why Everra spoke of the modern writers as evil influences. My companions were always quoting Denios, Caspro, Rettaca and other "new poets" and philosophers I'd never heard of, and everything they quoted, though much of the poetry was beautiful beyond any I knew, seemed to be critical, destructive, full of fierce emotions – pain, anger, dissatisfied longing. (Le Guin 2007:121)

It is significant that Orrec Caspro from *Gifts* is listed as one of these unsettlingly beautiful poets. This serves as a foreshadowing that Orrec will play a role in Gavir's future, but also links to the idea of the liberating power of words in the previous two novels. Gavir admits that it shocks him to hear such talk, and that he would not have expected this from educated and well-mannered men, who dared to believe that 'the great structure of society the Ancestors had left us could be changed at a whim!' (Le Guin 2007:121). And so it pains him that they are 'in their talk and thought shamelessly disloyal to their Houses and to Etra itself', that they talk 'of their masters disrespectfully, contemptuous of their faults' and that they have 'no pride in the soldiers of their House... [and speculate] about the morals even of the Senators' (Le Guin 2007:121). Over the course of the days they spend together, Gavir listens silently to their talk whilst anger builds up inside him, so that when one of them, Tadder, starts to talk about the fall of the city as a potential 'opportunity', Gavir can no longer hold back: 'I burst out at him. I don't know what I said – I raged at him as faithless, traitorous, ready to destroy our city from within even as the enemy besieged the walls' (Le Guin 2007:122). Tadder immediately apologises for offending Gavir with his ideas, saying that he

respects Gavir's sense of loyalty, but asks him to 'consider' that Tadder is being loyal too, in this case, to his 'own people', to his 'own kind' (Le Guin 2007:122). He also says no matter how he may talk of things, he would never 'urge any slave to rebel', knowing full-well the punishment that such action may merit (Le Guin 2007:122). This episode demonstrates a respect for Gavir's right to be himself, something which has not been accorded him by anyone before. Gavir is humbled by Tadder's attitude and subsides once again into a respectful silence, especially after learning that Tadder was born free, captured as a boy, and then tortured and branded when involved in a slave rebellion in another district. It is for these reasons that Tadder speaks so passionately about freedom and escaping oppression. Gavir still finds this idea hard to comprehend, admitting that it makes 'little sense to [him] for [he] couldn't yet conceive of a community greater than the walls of Etra, but [he] accepted it as a fact' (Le Guin 2007:122-123). However, Gavir also acknowledges that at least the others trust him not to report on them despite his being shocked by their attitudes of 'feigned loyalty to masters they hated' (Le Guin 2007:123). Despite all of this, Gavir also admits that he finds himself 'listening' and 'fascinated' despite being 'disgusted' and 'repelled' by his fellow slaves' talk (Le Guin 2007:123).

At the end of his stay at the College of Priests' Temple, Gavir finds he has been exposed to a substantial portion of the works of the 'modern poets' that he was so set against in the beginning, and that he has come to be affected by these works. It is only fitting that he is then given a handwritten copy of Orrec Caspro's *Cosmologies* by Mimen, a fellow slave. Gavir acknowledges that it 'was the first book [he] had ever owned' (Le Guin 2007:132). This text is significant and comes to play an important role as a guide and moral support to Gavir in his journey once he escapes Etra. Moreover, in his acceptance of the book from Mimen, it seems that perhaps Gavir is becoming more open to considering larger truths about his limited

worldview. Le Guin seems to be suggesting once again that literature frees us. This is because stories are not commands but opportunities for thought and expansion, as explored further on in this chapter.

And so gradually Gavir's resistance to slavery starts to develop and is then strengthened by Sallo's suffering. Initially, Sallo is 'promised' to the elder brother of the House, Yaven, an arrangement that makes her happy since he treats all the slaves well and with much respect. Although this means she is his personal slave and must live in the brothel-like 'silk rooms' with the other chosen slave girls, she is happy to be 'given' to someone as respectable and kind as Yaven. When war eventually comes to the city of Etra, Yaven and Torm are called away to fight. Shortly after Yaven's departure, Sallo discovers she is pregnant. However, due to starvation caused by the lengthy siege, Sallo loses the baby. Later, she is unexpectedly kidnapped one evening by Hoby and Torm. Silence reappears again as a significant motif when Gavir loses his sister in this episode. Sallo is 'accidentally drowned' that evening after she has been forcefully taken to a party held by friends of Torm. The parties these friends have are notorious for being debauched. Gavir is devastated when he hears the news of Sallo's death – she has been his sole source of comfort and joy throughout his life at Etra. On being told she has been taken away by Torm and Hoby, Gavir admits that he instinctively knows she is dead:

> I stood there with the others, but it was if everything and everyone moved away from me and I stood alone in a place where there was nothing and no one. I moved through the halls and courts of Arcamand with an emptiness around me. Voices came to be from a distance. The emptiness closed in and became dark, a low rough roof of black stone, a cave. (Le Guin 2007:148)

The motifs of vision/darkness and the hearing of voices here are reminiscent of Memer's experiences in the cave of the Oracle in *Voices.* They intensify Gavir's feelings of emptiness which then completely engulf him. Moreover, the mentioning of a cave foreshadows his

escape from Etra and his stumbling upon the wild Cuga's hideout, where he tries to recover from his escape and his overwhelming grief.

It is Everra who is chosen to break the news of Sallo's death to Gavir. Upon seeing Everra, Gavir demands to know: '"Will they punish Torm? Will they punish him?"' (Le Guin 2007:150). This is the first hint of rebellion in the normally loyal Gavir. For once, he is seeking revenge for a wrong committed against him (and Sallo). Everra tries to calm Gavir down, and in answer to his question, thoughtlessly poses a rhetorical question in return: '"For the death of a slave girl?"' (Le Guin 2007:151). The horrifying truth of this statement hits Gavir with full force and he observes how Everra's response makes him feel: 'Around his words silence spread out. Silence enlarged around me, wider and deeper. I was in a pool, at the bottom of a pool, not of water but of silence and emptiness, and it went on to the end of the world. I could not breathe the air, but I breathed that emptiness' (Le Guin 2007:150-151). This is a metaphorical vision which reflects Gavir's imagined vision of Sallo's death experience, but also how her death has left him feeling completely isolated, suffocated and empty. Everra's words and advice no longer hold any meaning for Gavir, and they become empty in themselves. He now needs to find his own path forward. And so Gavir simply watches Everra's mouth 'open and shut', seeing him as 'an old grey-haired man opening and shutting his mouth' (Le Guin 2007:151). Gavir feels completely alienated by and dissociated from Everra's words. This is significant as it suggests that Gavir has finally opened his eyes to what it really means to be enslaved, and that he now realises that he needs to start forming his own views about his life in Arcamand, especially when choosing in whom to place his trust. It is only then that Gavir sees what slavery entails: betrayal, suffering and oppression. After being 'paid' by the Mother of the House in order to compensate for Sallo's death, Gavir, in a shocked and grief-stricken state, wanders off into freedom, an act which is forbidden

since he is still a slave and thus the ‘property’ of the House.

It is on his meandering journey of escape that Gavir has three significant encounters with runaway slaves: firstly, he meets up with the wild Cuga, who lives off the land, hunting and foraging, and who nurses Gavir back to health in his cave. The encounter with Cuga is significant because it teaches Gavir that a simple life without many material goods or comforts is possible, yet limited in terms of social interaction. Secondly, Gavir encounters the Forest Brothers, which demonstrates to Gavir that his book-learning and storytelling skills are valuable and appreciated. Finally, he joins the Barnavites, an encounter which shows him that a ‘free brotherhood’ rhetoric is only hypocritically upheld by the runaway slaves in Barna’s City. This seems to demonstrate that the damaging effects caused by slavery are perpetuated even when slaves attempt to operate ‘outside’ the system. Both the Forest Brothers and the Barnavites are tribes of runaway slaves who have started their own hidden colonies out in the wilds of the forests. In theory, these slaves are no longer enslaved under masters, but are now free to live their lives as they wish. However, it soon becomes apparent that there are still hierarchies in place: a master-slave relationship between the leaders of the Forest Brothers and their followers, and between Barna (head of the Barnavites) and his men; and then a gender hierarchy in the Barnavites, in which female runaways, some of whom have been kidnapped and kept against their wishes, are oppressed by the male runaways. And so this seeming freedom is simply a façade. This also shows that an escape from physical enslavement does not guarantee real freedom. Gavir has to learn to see these truths for himself, before embarking on another escape to find a new identity.

During Gavir’s time at Cuga’s remote cave, although he finds solace in being removed from the rest of humankind, he comes to realise how the limitations of an isolated life have

affected Cuga's mind and skewed his view of his fellow humans. Cuga's intentional self-alienation is demonstrated when he correctly identifies Gavir as a runaway slave:

> "You run away. You think I'm a slave, don't you? Oh no. Oh no. You want runaways? You go on north, go on to the forest, that's where they are. I got nothing to do with them. Liars, thieves. I'm a free man. I was born free. I don't want to mix with them. Nor the farmers. Not the townsfolk, Sampa destroy them, liars, cheats, thieves. All of them liars, cheats, thieves". (Le Guin 2007:161)

Only in this extreme form of isolation can Cuga find any contentment, and in this way, he views himself as being free: "'I come here to be free of them, all of them....They call me the wild man, the hermit, they're afraid of me. They leave me be. Cuga the hermit! They keep away. They keep out"' (Le Guin 2007:161). Cuga, although generous to Gavir at times, is shown to be insane, delusional, and paranoid, and generally exhibits very little trust in his fellow humans. He unjustly accuses Gavir of trying to steal his possessions, and his character symbolises the extreme opposite to Gavir in that he has no trust in humankind. According to Rousseau et al. (1998:395), trust is 'a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectation of the intentions or behaviour of another'. It is clear that Cuga is not prepared to make himself vulnerable to others, nor have any positive expectations of them. It can be inferred that Cuga has probably been mistreated by others in the past. He thus completely lacks trust. Because of this he is alienated, and even somewhat psychologically tormented, and so chooses to live a life of seclusion. Eventually, and possibly because he wishes to return to solitude, he tells Gavir to leave the cave before the hardship of winter arrives and to travel north to band with his fellow runaway slaves. This episode also demonstrates that without trust there is no community and without community there is no humanity.

And so Gavir goes on to join the Forest Brothers. Throughout his journey from Etra, Gavir has carried Caspro's *Cosmologies* with him. One winter evening, as the Forest Brothers are

sitting around the hearth in a wooden cabin in the forest, it is Caspro's *Liberty* from the *Cosmologies* that Gavir recalls and sings for the others to great approbation (Le Guin 2007:180). This is what starts off a series of storytelling evenings, with Gavir reciting the stories and epics he learnt whilst studying under Everra in Etra. This is the only aspect he allows himself to remember about his life there, because the painful memory of Sallo is too much for his mind. Gavir is initially uncertain about how his reciting will be received by the uneducated Forest Brothers, many of whom he notices have 'little use for language, using a grunt or a gesture, or [who simply pass the time] sitting stolid and mute as animals' (Le Guin 2007:176).

Gavir also observes how the 'silence of the slave had gone so deep in them they could not break it' (Le Guin 2007:176). According to Helene Cixous (1981, cited in Neimneh 2014:52), 'silencing is a form of reducing one to the level of the body'. It is through being silenced by their masters that the slaves have been reduced to a physical existence – they thus believe that they are mere objects to be used by others. Being accustomed to this silence most of their lives perpetuates this state of being in them, and their lack of the use of words to express themselves further dehumanizes them by making them reliant on 'grunts' or 'gestures'. Gavir is at first 'bemused by [his] own capacity to recall the poetry and [the Brothers'] capacity to listen to it' (Le Guin 2007:184). However, he notices that the Brothers start treating him differently from then onwards because he can give them 'something they wanted' and something that helped them to while away the long winter nights, and they come to respect him because of this (Le Guin 2007:184). This shows that even in 'freedom' (which is a matter of perspective since the Brothers live in the Forest in hiding from the authorities), the habit of slavish silence is a difficult one to break, and Gavir's experience demonstrates that enslavement has leached something from these men's lives, leaving many of them voiceless,

and thus powerless in some way. Gavir's poetry recitals and stories are perhaps a way of filling that silence, and giving comfort where it is needed. Moreover, his storytelling provokes lively discussions amongst the men, which functions to break their silence at times, and to bond them in talk. For these reasons, Gavir's power of 'remembering' is valued.

The power of narrative/story is highlighted in this part of the novel. According to Hugh Crago (2005:12), 'narrative has always functioned in multiple ways, preserving accumulated knowledge, articulating meaning, offering cathartic release and pleasure, and promoting "healing" in the broad sense of reassurance as to each listener's place in the scheme of things'. Some of these aspects can be seen in the way the Forest Brothers react to Gavir's poetry recital. Eventually, however, Gavir's talent for storytelling and his consequent popularity start to pose a threat to the leaders of the band of brothers, especially Brigin, who reprimands Gavir for it:

> Booktalk! Why did Brigin say it in that contemptuous tone? There were no books in the forest. There had been no books in Brigin's life. Why did he sneer at them? Any of these men might well be jealous of a knowledge that had been jealously kept from them....I resented [his] sneers as mean-spirited, for I couldn't see anything unworthy of manhood in the tale I was telling. How was a tale of warfare and heroism weakening the men who listened to it so hungrily every night? Didn't it draw us together in real brotherhood, when after the telling we listened to one another argue the rights and wrongs of the general's tactics and the warriors' exploits? To sit stupid, mute, night after night under the rain like cattle, bored to mindlessness – was that what made us men? (Le Guin 2007:185)

Gavir is frustrated by Brigin's criticisms. He fails to see the danger inherent in the fact that his storytelling allows the men a welcome escape from their mundane lives and that he ultimately poses a threat to Brigin's leadership. Stories suggest alternatives, and so they are dangerous in this sense because they could inspire unrest amongst the men and upset the status quo. The fact that Gavir is reciting heroic poetry to the men is also significant, since it would involve descriptions of heroic deeds, of men overcoming great odds, and of incredible

feats which would appeal to such oppressed men as these. Gavir is ultimately providing the men with a form of Poetry Therapy, which is an effective therapy because poetry

> ...can be helpful in breaking resistance because it provides...a safe distance for making an emotional identification. By ostensibly talking about a poem, [one] begins to talk about self. In essence, the poem serves as a springboard for him or her to disclose feelings, goals, and values. (Mazza 2003:34)

The heroic poetry motivates the men to debate issues which may relate in some way to their own lives, creating a space to explore possibilities and to discuss psychological issues they may not have been aware of. Moreover, as touched on in Chapter 3, poetry can be used to promote resistance, to liberate the mind, and to create a sense of community: '[T]he language skills of rhetoric together with armed struggle are essential to an oppressed people's resistance to domination and oppression and to an organized liberation movement' (Harlow 1987:xv). The leaders of the Forest Brothers are obviously aware of the stirring effect Gavir's poetry recitals have on the men. They see that the recitals may lead to unrest and instability within the group itself, making it less manageable and harder to control. This is probably why Brigin prefers the men to stay 'mute like cattle' and thus remain stifled by ignorance.

This issue, along with the cruel death of a fellow brother at the hands of Eter, one of the other Forest Brothers' leaders, spurs Gavir on to leave the community. Thus Gavir, Venne, and Chamry, a group of friends, decide to desert the Brotherhood. Gavir, however, feels guilty about this, admitting that he feels as if he is 'running out on [the rest] of them' (Le Guin 2007:193). To this, the wise and well-travelled Chamry replies: ''You're too loyal, Gav, it's a fault in you. Don't look back. Touch and go, it's best'' (Le Guin 2007:193). What Chamry is suggesting here is that Gavir must always move forward in a positive way, that dwelling on past events is not productive, and that he should not become too attached to things, but simply move on when it is the right time to do so. Gavir is confused by this statement, which he admits 'seemed strange' to him, not understanding exactly what Chamry means by it.

According to Gavir, at that time he never 'looked back', had 'nothing to be loyal to, nothing to hold on to', and he simply 'went where [his] luck took [him]' (Le Guin 2007:193). Gavir does not 'look back' because he cannot bear to contemplate the reality of Etra, which he has worked on blocking out of his mind. During his entire journey, Gavir has been avoiding confronting his memories of Sallo and of his life in Etra, and it is as if he has built a wall in his memory so that he can block them out: 'Memories made my body hunch up in pain and my mind go blank in fear. I pushed them away, turned away from them. Remembering would kill me. Forgetting kept me alive' (Le Guin 2007:178-179). The motif of denying memories works here to show Gavir is 'blinding' himself to his past (just as Orrec does in *Gifts*), and that he does not want to face the reality of it. However, this is not what Chamry is referring to. His point is perhaps that Gavir, despite denying any sense of loyalty to anyone, is still being blinded by his loyalty to a certain extent, even when staying with the Brothers would be detrimental to himself. And so this is an issue he will still need to address in the future if he is to overcome this weakness in himself. Moreover, perhaps Gavir is simply conflating loyalty with obligation, since the Forest Brothers have taken him in and he has undertaken an oath to be loyal to the group. Furthermore, he has come to fill an important role for some of the group who depend on his storytelling to while the hours away. It is for these reasons that Gavir feels guilty.

Significantly, once Gavir joins the Barnavites, he is again valued for his storytelling, with their leader, Barna, telling him that he established his 'city of free men' based on a desire to impart knowledge to his men:

> "And so I knew what was missing here. I could make my city of free men, but what's the good of freedom to the ignorant? What's freedom itself but the power of the mind to learn what it needs and think what it likes? Ah, even if your body's chained, if you have the thoughts of the philosophers and the words of the poets in your head, you can be free of your chains, and walk among the great!" (Le Guin 2007:205)

This idea of being immersed in 'words' and 'thoughts' can perhaps also account for why Gavir feels content being a slave at Arcamand because he is able to escape into the freedom of the works he is taught by Everra. It is through reading that he is able to gain some sense of freedom, even if he is not aware of this. According to Crago (2005:18), bibliotherapy (the act of reading texts as a means of psychological therapy) can provide 'a language in which a child or adult may begin to talk about what has previously been inchoate', 'the comfort in knowing that one is not alone', 'vicarious insights into one's problems', and 'suggestions...of ways to resolve the reader's problems'. It thus functions on many levels in guiding the reader (be it subliminal or conscious) to achieve a certain level of awareness regarding their own situations or problems, and may suggest a possible solution to these. This is perhaps how reading has served Gavir (and Orrec and Memer as well) in coping with slavery, and accounts for why he did not question slavery to any significant extent. Gavir is thus understandably impressed with Barna's view of the importance of education. He also realises that he had lost his own reverence for learning during his initial encounter with the Forest Brothers:

> [Barna's] praise of learning moved me deeply. I had been living among people so poor that knowledge of anything much beyond their poverty had no meaning to them, and so they judged it useless. I had accepted their [judgement], because I had accepted their poverty. There had been a long time when I'd never thought of the words of the makers; and when they came back to me, at Brigin's camp, it seemed a miraculous gift that had nothing to do with my will or intention. Having been so poor, so ignorant myself, I had no heart to say that ignorance cannot judge knowledge. (Le Guin 2007:205)

Perhaps what is also being suggested here is that learning is not just for the educated or well-off. Learning can enrich anyone, no matter their circumstances. And so Gavir comes to revere Barna because of his views on the importance of education and starts to feel guilty that he did not value his power of learning as Barna does:

> But here was a man who had proved his intelligence, energy, and courage, raising himself out of poverty and slavery to a kind of kingship, and brining a whole people with him into independence; and he set knowledge, learning, and poetry

> above even such achievements. I was ashamed of my weakness, and rejoiced in his strength (Le Guin 2007:205).

However, Gavir's reverence for Barna is not sustainable in the long term, especially when he comes to realise the hypocritical nature of Barna's controlling power over his people. Essentially Barna suffers from a leader complex. He speaks philosophically about educating others but takes little action in the matter. He does not practise what he preaches. As Le Guin points out (1997:125), when you use force alone to overcome oppression then you simply 'kill the boss and you become the boss'. However, the ''old slave mind, boss mind' can be changed by new ways of thinking, by education' and only then will there 'be no more slavery' (Lothian 2006:385). This suggests that knowledge is the way to freedom.

Ironically, during his stay with the Barnavites, Gavir also hears Barna recount his tale of slavery and of how he was lucky enough to be educated as a slave, and how this fact made him feel 'valued'. However, Barna admits that he still realised he did not have his liberty, nor any true power. Only then does Gavir allow himself to remember Etra and to contemplate the relevance of Barna's tale for himself:

> Turning from his tale, I looked back for the first time in – how long? I looked across the wall I'd built to keep me from remembering. I looked and saw the truth: I had been a slave in a great house, a rich house, in the city, obedient to my masters, owning no freedom but what they allowed me. And I had been happy.
> In the house of my slavery I had known a love so dear to me that I could not bear to think about it, because when I lost it, I lost everything.
> All my life had been built on trust, and that trust had been betrayed by the Family of Arcamand. Arcamand: with the name, with the word, everything I had forgotten, had refused to remember, came back and was mine again, and with it all the unspeakable pain I had denied. (Le Guin 2007:218)

Gavir admits he was happy in his slavery, but he realises this was only because he had Sallo with him. His childhood happiness is intrinsically linked to being with her, and so after losing her, he has to face the truth of this situation, that he has lost 'everything'. In this excerpt, Gavir talks about his life's being 'built on trust', which is then betrayed by the Family

because they fail to protect Sallo and do not punish her assailants. This shows, once again, just as in the case of Miv, that they always protect 'their own kind'. So although they appear to care for their slaves, it is simply a façade. Or perhaps the system of slavery and control do not really allow them a choice in the matter either. Gavir's reflections on this open the floodgate to his painful memories of his time at Arcamand, and he is then forced to confront his pain. This culminates in his confiding in a fellow 'free' slave, the dignified Diero, a slave woman who originally escaped with Barna to the forest to start the Barnavites. Diero can tell that something is bothering Gavir, and upon her pressing him, he finally confides in her how about he felt when he came to realise the betrayal that had taken place was mostly due to the oppressive nature of the system of slavery in place at Arcamand:

> "After I saw [Sallo], I saw her dead. The Mother sent for me. She called her "our sweet Sallo". She gave me – she gave me money – for my sister – "
> A sound came out of my throat them, not a sob but a hoarse howl. Diero held me close. She said nothing.
> I was silent at last. I was mortally tired.
> "They betrayed our trust," I said.
> I felt Diero nod. She sat beside me, her hand on mine.
> "That's what it is," she said, almost inaudibly. "Do you keep the trust, or not. To Barna it's all power. But it's not. It's trust". (Le Guin 2007:219-220)

Diero's statement is crucial. Real trust is not power-based. Gavir is upset because he trusted in the Mother of the House, who had to know that Torm and Hoby had taken Sallo forcefully from the silk rooms, and yet did nothing to stop them. This demonstrates that Gavir could not even rely on the Mother, a powerful and well-respected figure in the House, to protect Sallo and to place Sallo's safety before her own son's desires. Thus the issue of trust and betrayal is brought up again here. Without trust between two parties, there is no hope of a sustainable relationship. This also raises the question as to whether or not Gavir would have stayed in Etra if Torm and Hoby had been properly punished by the Mother and Father for what they had done to Sallo. The slaves of Arcamand were loyal to their masters because they were well-treated relative to other Houses in Etra, and so this shows that trust functions, to an

extent, in a productive way. However, once that trust is betrayed (and in Gavir's experience this happens twice, firstly with Miv and then with Sallo), there is no knowing when or if the betrayal will ever end.

And similarly, a lack of trust is also an issue amongst the Barnavites. Barna's vision for the Barnavites fails because he lacks trust in others and believes that it is power that keeps his leadership in place. It is Barna's overdeveloped sense of jealousy, due to this lack of trust that goads him to physically threaten others, including Gavir, and which leads to Gavir's escaping yet again. Because of his inability to trust, Barna is unpredictable, and thus cannot, in turn, be fully trusted himself. This is a vital quality required in successful leadership. And so, like Cuga, Barna acts as a foil to Gavir, showing the extreme opposite of Gavir's problem – he trusts too little. Le Guin is shows that a balance is needed between these two oppositions, because ultimately, there does need to be a certain amount of trust amongst people if society is to function productively. Moreover, trust 'enables cooperative behaviour' (Gambetta (1988), cited in Rousseau et al. 1998:394) and 'reduces harmful conflict' (Meyerson, Weick & Kramer (1996), cited in Rousseau et al. 1998:394). As his stay in the Forest lengthens, Gavir realises that cooperation is severely lacking; for example, Barna constantly promises that Gavir will be able to run a small school to educate runaway slave children, but then always makes an excuse not to allow this when the time comes. Barna therefore fails to practise what he preaches.

Similarly, conflict abounds between the Barnavite male runaways, who seem to squabble over any new female recruits. And so Gavir, during his stay with the Barnavites, comes to question whether they truly represent a band of brotherhood based on trust, and whether they are at all better than any other House that enslaves people and holds them captive against

their will. This thought occurs to him when he realizes the gender oppression Barna and his men are guilty of with regard to the female members of their group:

> Now it occurred to me to wonder about this endless supply of girls. Were they all runaways? Did they all ask to come here? Were they all seeking freedom?
> Yes, of course they were. They were escaping from masters who forced sex on them.
> Was Barna's house any better then whatever they'd escaped from?
> Yes, of course it was. Here, they weren't raped, they weren't beaten. They were well-fed, well-clothed, idle.
> Exactly like the women in the silk rooms at Arcamand.
> I cringe, remembering how I cringed when that thought first came to me. I am ashamed now as I was then.
> I thought I was keeping and cherishing Sallo in my memory, but I had forgotten her again, refused to see her, refused to see what her life and her death had shown me. I had run away again. (Le Guin 2007:234)

Gavir sees how Barna and his fellow men are perpetuating the kind of behaviour they despised in their former masters, and which Gavir has come to realise defines what was happening to his sister and her fellow female slaves in the silk rooms. This makes Gavir physically cringe when he thinks about how life must really have been for his sister then. According to Le Guin (1993a:23-24) in her essay *Earthsea Revisioned*: 'The deepest foundation of the order of oppression is gendering, which names the male normal, dominant, active, and the female other, subject, passive. To begin to imagine freedom, the myths of gender...have to be exploded and discarded.' For Le Guin, there can never be any real sense of freedom until the 'myths of gender' are overcome. It is ironic that the male runaway slaves inflict this type of oppression on the female slaves since they have experienced oppression themselves. As Lothian (2006:384) points out, however, 'habits of mind are not changed simply by declaring that things are now otherwise, [and thus] deeply established oppressions cannot be simply overcome'. Even though the slaves have run away in order to obtain freedom, they are still enslaved by their modes of thinking. Perhaps they cannot fully be blamed for their thinking here.

In her essay, 'American SF and The Other', Le Guin (1989a:99) says that she believes the following:

> If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself – as men have done to women... – you may hate it, or deify it; but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality. You have made it into a thing, to which the only possible relationship is a power relationship. And thus you have fatally impoverished your reality. You have, in fact, alienated yourself.

The Barnavites covet women as objects to be possessed, and the Forest Brothers deny that women have any value. The Forest Brothers, like the Barnavites, have also 'othered' women. However, they have done this because they feel threatened by the presence of females, who, it is believed, are too overbearing or bossy (Le Guin 2007:176). In other words, women are too difficult to control. They forbid females from joining their group, and by doing this they diminish the value of any contribution women could make to the community. This could account for why they lead such an impoverished existence in the Forest.

Le Guin's (1982, cited in Wolf 1982:15) anti-essentialist feminist theory views sexism as just another 'form of oppression...resulting from fear of The Other'. Furthermore, this fear 'enshrines dualism' (1982, cited in Wolf 1982:15). Le Guin suggests that fear of the Other creates the need for binary oppositions, for example, 'superior/inferior'. It is only in this way that difference/opposition can be marked out by the oppressor as undesirable. It is the balancing of binary oppositions which is needed to remedy this situation. This falls in line with the idea of balance in Le Guin's Taoist philosophy, and which can be applied to *Powers*, especially to the notion of balance in obtaining freedom. The runaway slave communities can never truly be free because there is no gender balance. They thus alienate themselves from each other and can never truly experience being a functional community.

When Barna, who falls into a dualistic way of thinking, takes an intense liking to Irad, a new pretty female 'arrival', everyone immediately notices how possessive and fiercely jealous he becomes. One evening, when Irad can no longer stand Barna's advances, she seeks with Diero. When Barna arrives in a seething rage, he demands to know where they are hiding her. Gavir describes how Barna receives no answer: 'Diero looked down. Trained in submissiveness all her life, she was unable to answer him with anything but a shrinking silence. And I too shrank from the big man blind with rage' (Le Guin 2007:243). Here the blindness and silence of the slave is briefly touched upon again. Barna takes out his rage on Gavir, beating and threatening him. For this reason, Diero advises Gavir that he must leave Barna's city straight away, or risk being killed by Barna. It is shortly after his escape, that Gavir decides he needs to look for his people, the Marsh people, hoping that they will be able to help him understand his inherited power of foresight, so that he may finally put his trust in people to whom he can truly feel he 'belongs'.

The significance of Gavir's experience with the Barnavites is that he may still have too much trust in others. He only reluctantly agrees to leave, explaining the incident away as a mere 'misunderstanding' (Le Guin 2007:249). However, Diero's and Chamry's insistent pleadings that he has underestimated Barna in this case demonstrate that Gavir is still too loyal to others, even at the risk of his own safety. As mentioned before, trust requires willingness 'to accept vulnerability' and so personal risk becomes an important factor in trust (Rousseau et al. 1998:395). Moreover, Gavir needs to learn to take calculated risks, not blind ones. This is relevant in terms of adolescent development because adolescents need to learn that trust needs to be managed so that it works in a positive and not a detrimental manner.

The Barnavite and the Forest Brother communities seem to be failed experiments in freedom

because neither truly escapes the master-slave mentality the members have been conditioned into. If they refuse to educate themselves in any meaningful way, then this mindset will never change. According to J.R.R. Tolkien (1964:79) in his essay 'On Fairy Stories', there is a difference between escaping imprisonment (what he refers to as 'the Escape of the Prisoner'), and deserting one's duty (what he calls 'the Flight of the Deserter'). In attempting to escape enslavement, the forest runaways have made a positive move towards freedom. However, they do not live entirely free lives because they are enslaved by their own limited mindsets. In this way, their escape can be likened to desertion, because they have deserted the responsibility they have to towards one another and to themselves, a responsibility that comes with freedom. Their sense of fear related to the loss of this limited freedom, or of their own power, involves feelings of cowardliness associated with desertion. For this reason, they are not truly free.

Gavir forms two significant relationships with regard to trust and betrayal during his time with the Ferusi clan in the Marshes. The first of these is with Gegemer, his aunt on his mother's side, who feels much guilt at having let her sister go 'too far south' the day the slavers captured her and her children. As a seer ('ambamer') of the tribe, who, like Gavir, has prophetic visions, Gegemer feels extremely distressed that she was unable to locate her sister and her children in her visions after they disappeared. Furthermore, when Gavir first arrives in the village, Gegemer fails to recognise him, nor has she foreseen his coming there. One of the young Ferusi girls, Tisso, tries to explain to Gavir why Gegemer treats him with hostility and defensiveness, saying:

> "Then you came walking into the village, and still she didn't see you. She didn't see who you were, until you said your name. Then everyone saw. She was ashamed....She thinks Amba is punishing her because she let Tano go alone so far south....And she thinks you know this". (Le Guin 2007:289)

Gavir now understands why his aunt is so cold and realises that she feels ashamed that she

has failed him. The motif of vision can be seen here once again, and it is used ironically to show 'blindness' and an inability to see. It also demonstrates that the power both Gegemer and Gavir possess is a burdensome one at times; is difficult to understand or use in a constructive way. Later on, Gavir confronts his aunt in the hope that, as a seer, she will help him to understand his power of vision. Because life in the Marshes is based on cultural formalities and rituals, many tasks are divided according to gender, and Gegemer declines to help Gavir, since she is 'merely' a woman, and advises him that he should be trained by a male seer if he wishes to understand his gift. This is how Gavir comes to meet Dorod, the seer, who comes to represent the second most significant relationship in Gavir's experiences with the Marsh People.

Dorod represents a final testing of Gavir's easily-misled, trusting nature. On his initial journey to the Marshes, Gavir seems to be more aware that he needs to be careful about in whom he decides to put his trust:

> I knew all too well, that I was prone to put too much trust in people....Overtrustful, I had let myself be betrayed, and so had betrayed others. Maybe I had come to the right place at last, among people like me, who would meet trust with trust. (Le Guin 2007:265)

Gavir may be being naïve here, thinking that just because he has found his former family/community he can now fall back into a relationship of assumed trust on both sides. He also recognises that in being betrayed, he too has had to betray, an example of this being that he illegally escaped the Family in Etra. Nevertheless, Gavir is hopeful that issues of trust and betrayal may be overcome once he finds his clan. However, it is significant that at this point in his stay, Gavir starts to show a more cynical side, especially when it comes to putting his trust in people and in obeying them as he has so readily done in the past. And for this reason, he clashes often with Dorod:

> My heart is not naturally rebellious, and I wanted very much to learn what he

> could teach me about my power, but I'd learned to distrust my own trustfulness. Dorod demanded absolute trust. He gave me arbitrary orders and expected silent obedience. I questioned the reason for each act. He refused to answer. I refused to obey. (Le Guin 2007:301)

A kind of 'natural progression' has taken place within Gavir, who is now learning to question the world and to not simply trust in or obey others without forethought. Throughout his stay at Dorod's hut, Gavir questions his orders. When Dorod refuses to give him the answers he seeks, Gavir threatens to leave. This worries Dorod, as his status as a seerman is strongly dependent on his students' visions:

> "Gavir you cannot go," he said, and I said, "What can I learn if you keep me in ignorance?"
> "The seerman is the guide. It is his burden and task to carry the mystery for the seer."
> ...."Not this seer," I said. "I need to know what I'm doing and why I should do it. You want blind obedience. Why should a seer be blind?"
> "The seer of visions must be guided,...[n]o one can walk that path by himself, unguided." (Le Guin 2007:302)

Ignorance and blindness are motifs in this instance, demonstrating that Gavir has finally woken up to the danger of not truly 'seeing' what he is doing. Dorod argues that it is because Gavir is a man that he is not open to trusting Dorod, whereas a child '"can be trained to obey in all things"' (Le Guin 2007:303). Gavir objects to this statement, bitterly answering that he was '"well trained in trust and obedience' as a child"', and that now, all he wants is to know '"what [he is] to put [his] trust in, and what power [he is] obeying"' (Le Guin 2007:303). This shows a development in Gavir and a maturing of his outlook on the world.

Blind obedience and its consequences are a central concept to this episode. According to Jane Bluestein (2003:1), obedience is essentially 'unquestioning compliance' and is something to be wary of:

> Obedient [children] may be great at taking orders, but they tend to be really weak at making decisions, [an] important life skill...[necessary for] them to develop. Lacking these skills, and the confidence to function outside [parents'] immediate

> influence,...children become vulnerable to a host of problems ranging from susceptibility to peer pressure to ending up in relationships or situations in which their actual safety could be compromised.

Thus obedience fosters dependence, which limits growth towards emotional maturity. This can lead to blindly following orders and can ultimately be detrimental, as in Gavir's steady decline in physical and mental health under Dorod. Gavir is seeing the truth for once; he realises that he should question and not readily obey. Dorod only tolerates Gavir's questioning because he needs Gavir's power in order to hold onto his own status as seerman. He tries to explain that Gavir is 'the eyes' of their people, and that he is their 'voice', and that their 'kinfolk and all the clans of Ferusi' have need of them both (Le Guin 2007:303-304). This discourse of social responsibility from an authority figure is similar to Canoc's discourse of duty in *Gifts*. However, despite this pressure, Gavir continues to resist Dorod as best as he can, until gradually, Dorod wears Gavir down and finally convinces him to continue with their training. When Gavir finally (and reluctantly) puts his trust in Dorod, he pays a price for it.

Dorod's desire for fame and glory amongst the clans results in his pushing Gavir more than he should, drugging and starving Gavir in order to 'force' his visions. Dorod has already damaged a pupil in the past because of this, a young boy who died under his tutelage. Dorod uses Gavir in the same way that harsh slave owners use their slaves and so ironically, history is repeating itself here. This also indicates how power-hungry Dorod really is. He is willing to risk Gavir's health in the pursuit of his visions:

> He asked me to tell him all I had seen, and I tried, but even as I told him new visions came to me and he and the hut were gone....And then I would be lying in the dark hut, sick and aching and dizzy, hardly able to sit up. He would come and give me water and make me eat a little, talk to me and try to make me talk. "You are a brave man, my Gavir, you will be a great seer," he told me, and I clung to him,...the only actual face, the only hand I could hold, my guide and saviour, my false guide, my betrayer. (Le Guin 2007:313)

Significantly, Gavir realises that Dorod's motives are false and that he has betrayed him. One day, after Gavir has grown very weak, his aunt comes to the hut to inform him of a vision she has had. She immediately realizes how sick Gavir is and takes him away. Once she has Gavir in safety, she is able to nurse him back to health and tell him the vision she has seen of him, crossing two rivers in order to escape a deadly foe. She goes on to warn him that he must not stay long with the Marsh people, but that he must prepare to leave them. The entire Dorod episode functions to demonstrate that Gavir's will is growing stronger, that he no longer easily trusts others, but that he still has some learning to do when it comes to 'reading' people. Bluestein (2003:2) suggests that rather than simply obeying or disobeying, what children need to do is to 'behave cooperatively'. Choosing to be cooperative involves becoming more active in decision-making processes, taking responsibility for one's actions, and, as a result, building independence (Bluestein 2003:2). Moreover, becoming independent encourages children to rely less upon others for their self-image and to place less importance upon what others 'think and expect' of them (Bluestein 2003:2). Thus young adults can learn that decision-making and the taking on of responsibilities is ultimately empowering, and allows them the freedom to make choices and to deal more ably with the consequences thereof. By finally resisting the allure of Dorod's false promises about the use of his power, Gavir is able to come to his own decision about what he wants for himself.

And so Gavir, heeding his aunt's warning, acknowledges that it is time for him to move on. He also accepts that he will probably never fully understand his gift of vision. What is more, he misses the use of his other power, being able to tell stories from memory, since this feat is frowned upon by the clansmen. Storytelling amongst the Marsh people is seen as an act belonging to the female sphere, and so, not wanting to waste all he has learnt, and desiring to positively use this knowledge, Gavir realises he must move on:

> What good was a head full of stories and histories and poetry?...Stories [in the Marshes] were for women and children....All I had learned from books was wasted among them. Was I then to forget it all, betray my memory, and let my mind and spirit, too, dwindle away and grow weaker as I grew older? (Le Guin 2007:320)

This can be related to both Orrec in *Gifts* and Memer in *Voices*. If Orrec had chosen not to lift his blindfold, he would never have been of use in the raid on his people, nor would he have become a great poet and storyteller. If Memer had not learnt the history of Ansul and its mythologies, she would not have had the inspiration or courage to rebel against the Alds. Moreover, it is through the reading of books that she comes to realise the enrichment and knowledge to be gained from them. The idea of the power of narrative is once again referred to here. For once Gavir is showing loyalty to himself and shows confidence in his own abilities. Further contemplating this idea, Gavir also realises that the slavers who took him as a child 'had stolen [his] people from [him]' and that he could 'never wholly be one of them', and that '[t]o see [this] was to see that [he] must go on' (Le Guin 2007:320-321). His identity has always been subject to and dependent on the actions of others and Gavir has even to an extent been complicit in this. These realisations, linked to the motifs of betrayal, seeing, and reality, along with his aunt's warning vision, make Gavir decide that he must leave and move on with his life. Returning 'home' is not an option for Gavir. In fact, trying to do so by seeking out the Marsh people, may be seen as a regression, since his power for words and storytelling are rendered useless among them and he is taken advantage of rather than nurtured. And so Gavir decides to continue on his journey. First he returns to Cuga's cave to retrieve the money given him by the Mother of Arcamand, and then he crosses through the forests he lived in before coming to the Marshes.

In the forests, Gavir discovers the Barnavites' home has been destroyed by city soldiers. He finds little Melle, Irad's younger sister, who has been held captive in the 'care' of a dubious

Barnavite man. Gavir takes Melle with him and they journey across the countryside through various towns in the hope of getting to Mesun, the university town where Orrec Caspro resides. This is significant because Gavir positions himself for the first time as a caregiver rather than as one seeking care. In one of the inns of a town where they halt briefly, Gavir overhears a tale of a runaway slave from the Marshes, whom a 'loyal' slave from Etra is hunting down. Gavir then realizes that Hoby must be looking for him. Gavir and Melle decide to leave the inn and to camp out in some fields. Here Gavir reflects on how he feels about the fact that Hoby is hunting him down with the sanction of some in Arcamand:

> It grieved me that blind hate and rancour should be my last link to Arcamand. I could think now of the people of that house with gratitude for what they had given me – kindness, security, learning, love....I was able to see, in part at least, why the Mother and Father had betrayed my trust. The master lives in the same trap as the slave, and may find it even harder to see beyond it. But Torm and his slave-double Hoby never wanted to look beyond it; they valued nothing but power, the most brutal control of other people....As for Hoby,...the knowledge that I was going about as a free man would goad him to rageful, vengeful pursuit. I had no doubt that he was on my trail. And I was deeply afraid of him. (Le Guin 2007:356)

Finally Gavir admits that his experience at Arcamand was not a completely negative one, and he acknowledges that he was cared for there. He now understands why the Mother and Father betrayed his trust, since they, like the slaves, were 'enslaved' by the system of slavery itself, and so they would inevitably have had to make difficult choices when trying to abide by such a system. The problem the system produces is that it allows for people to share a life in close proximity, a situation from which love or caring can develop. However, Gavir realizes that family and blood-ties will always be chosen above anything else. The desire to own and control others for gain is a system that will always be flawed. This type of control leads to interdependence, and also to a division of loyalties. No one is truly free in a system of slavery – the masters are tied to their slaves just as much as the slaves are tied to their masters. Gavir also sees that Torm and Hoby are simply vengeful and power-hungry men who desire to control others. This desire means that Hoby will never stop pursuing Gavir. It is only once he

is able to cross the second river on his journey to Mesun that Gavir is able to outrun him.

Once Gavir and Melle evade Hoby, who is either drowned or washed away at the crossing of the second river, they journey on to Mesun, where eventually they meet Orrec, Gry and Memer. On being invited to meet Orrec in his study, Gavir approaches him with the copy of the *Cosmologies* he has carried about with him throughout his journey. He explains to Orrec what a comfort and inspiration the work has been for him:

> "When I was a slave I was forbidden to read your work. But I was given this book by a fellow slave. When I lost everything, I lost it, but again it was given me....It was my guide. So I – So I followed it to its maker. And seeing you, I knew I have seen you all my life – that I was to come here". (Le Guin 2007:381)

This confirms that Gavir has been on the right path all along and indicates that he was meant to fulfil his destiny of escaping servitude and to make his way to the renowned poet. The vision Gavir has had all his life of Orrec in the study speaking to him has now confirmed this.

Near the end of the novel, Memer and Gavir briefly discuss their ideas about slavery, with Gavir saying that he did not experience his time as a slave as being one of 'evil slavery', to which Memer replies with a question: '"Can slavery not be evil?"' (Le Guin 2007:385). Gavir answers by saying that it is possible if your masters are not inherently cruel and '"if you don't know there's anything else"' (Le Guin 2007:385). He points out that if the system is acceptable to everyone else, and they believe that it is simply '"the way things are and must be"', then it is impossible to view it as evil or wrong (Le Guin 2007:385). Memer contemplates this and asks a rhetorical question – is it really possible to not know? (Le Guin 2007:385) Perhaps what Memer is suggesting is a willingness to see other possibilities, so that self-knowledge is allowed to flourish.

That very afternoon, when Gavir is invited by Orrec to come and live and work with him in

Mesun. Gavir is taken aback by such a kind and generous offer. He is hesitant about accepting it. But Orrec will not allow this and he asks Gavir: '"Did you not see me, half your life ago, in your visions, and I spoke your name? Were you not coming here to me?" he said, quietly but fiercely. "If we're guided, are we to argue with the guide?"' (Le Guin 2007:390). This question shows that Gavir must learn to trust in himself, in his own visions, and then he can move on positively and with assurance. In *Powers*, just as in *Gifts*, it is the idea of self-knowledge which is posited as a means of moving towards freedom.

A central concept within Foucault's (1988, quoted in May 2011:79) notions of power and freedom is that freedom allows for 'a space of possible transformation'. This idea can perhaps be likened to Homi Bhabha's (1994:227) concept of the Third Space as a space in which 'newness enters the world'. May (2011:79) explains that this means 'freedom is not simply a matter of being left alone but is also a matter of re-making ourselves into what we would like to be: freedom *for*, not just freedom *from'*. This means that it is possible to work within the limitations of any historical location/situation and redefine ourselves accordingly. And so, in *Powers*, the protagonists' adventures come full circle in search of this freedom. Throughout his adventures, Gavir's weakness is pointed out to him; he is too loyal and trusting. He needs self-knowledge before he can give his trust wisely. It is only through the attainment of self-knowledge, and the development of an independent identity, that he (and the other protagonists) can overcome enslavement and journey towards freedom. It is the 'Hymn of Orrec Caspro', dealing with notions of liberty, which in *Powers* leads Gavir to reconsider his view of slavery. It is Gavir's 'remembering' of events (that is, his psychic foreseeing of events), part of his Marshlands' genetic heritage, which allows him to enter a world of myth and sacredness, and thus, to expand his mind. His capacity for memorising stories arises from this gift, and he is then able to share it with others, inspiring emotional responses in them.

Overall, the idea of the power of story to transform is explored in the novels, and this may offer young adults affirmation for ways of being.

Chapter 5 – Necessary Adaptation:

Knowledge, Power, Narrative, and Rebellion in Adolescent Identity Formation

> Rapid changes in physical and social arenas force the adolescent to question previous assumptions and develop a clearer sense of who they are, what they believe and what they will become. (Erikson (1980), cited in Waller 2009:31)

There are three main motifs (or a combination thereof) evident in each of the *Annals of the Western Shore* novels: vision in *Gifts*, hearing in *Voices*, and trust in *Powers.* Together they function to show how knowledge needs to be developed, either when there is a lack of it, or when it is incomplete, or is being denied in some way. Jean Piaget's theory of intellectual growth is applicable to this process of development. He suggests that 'the child discovers conservation – permanence [stability] across apparent change – with the aid of reason. It is by reasoning about his experience that the child is able to overcome illusions and discover how things really are' (Piaget (1965), quoted in Elkind 1970:5). All the protagonists in these novels are forced to reason with themselves on issues they are struggling with: Orrec with his self-inflicted blindfolding, Memer with her hatred for the Alds, and Gavir with his overdeveloped sense of trust. By finally facing the truth of their situations, and the changes they must undergo, the protagonists come to terms with the reality in which they find themselves. Through a process of reasoning about these changes, they develop knowledge about themselves and about the world in which they live.

Developing knowledge is also part of the process of growth, adaptation, and power acquisition in adolescents. Ideas of reading and knowledge acquisition, especially through story and history, are important in adolescent development. Using Susan Cooper's novel, *King of Shadows* (1999), as an example, Waller (2009:38-39) explains that 'textual

knowledge (that is, knowledge gained through literature) is given authority through [the protagonist's] experiential reality'. This demonstrates that an 'importance lies in the way that the past functions to provide a base or a constructive educational tool to allow teenage characters to progress to the next developmental stage in their own era' Waller (2009:39). We see this happening to all three protagonists in the *Western Shore* series. All three are exposed to mythologies, legends, histories and poetry from the texts they encounter, and these serve to motivate and inspire them, allowing them to grow in knowledge, and to consider alternative ideologies.

This is where the ideas of bibliotherapy are central to the trilogy. As Crago (2005:17) points out, texts 'can function as "potentiating devices", eliciting from individuals the full development of what is already latent within them, but which might never flower otherwise'. The reading of texts can thus be seen as a gateway to unleashing potential within readers. And this seems to be suggested throughout Le Guin's trilogy. All three protagonists value books and the knowledge they contain. Reading is never presented as a chore for them or described as an undesirable pastime. In *Gifts*, reading is seen as something 'foreign' that 'outsiders' do, and an exoticism of sorts is associated with it. In *Voices*, reading is seen as a forbidden act, and so the subversion and danger inherent in carrying it out may appeal to adolescents. In *Powers*, reading is seen as a privileged act, allowed only to 'free' men. The novel also promotes the idea that reading and the ideas inherent in texts can be 'dangerous', or pose a threat to those in power. All of these concepts imply that the act of reading is important and should be held in esteem. Reading itself becomes an act of rebellion in the novels, something which goes against the norm. Moreover, it is only through acquiring more knowledge through reading about the world they find themselves in that the protagonists are able to empower themselves. This message is passed on to readers of the trilogy in turn,

suggesting that they are capable of empowering themselves through this process as well.

According to G.R. Carlsen (1980, quoted in Waller 2009:62), fantasy offers teenagers 'exciting roles that relate to their hopes and desires'. Fantasy thus 'does not tie readers into the limited potential of teen realism, where boundaries and hardships exist in the same degree as their lived experience', but rather it allows readers 'to project themselves into a narrative that better suits their egocentric needs' (Waller 2009:62). Thus adolescents are able to place themselves vicariously in the roles of the protagonists who feature in fantasy. This allows them to explore ideas of power in a 'safe', albeit secondary, way. Moreover, because most adolescents like to be seen as individuals with a unique identity, the use of fantastic tropes (such as magical powers) 'can function as ways of differentiating a remarkable self from the mass of identities available in realist narratives' (Waller 2009:63). Interestingly, none of the protagonists in the *Western Shore* series rebel against the idea of having a unique, supernatural power. Rather, they tend to rebel against the type of power it is, or simply struggle to fully understand it. This is because the powers they have do not necessarily advantage them.

Le Guin's fantasy trilogy is relevant in addressing adolescent issues of power, growth and identity formation. In *Gifts*, Orrec is challenged with 'typical adolescent tasks or sites of struggle' (Waller 2009:37) because he has to challenge his father's authority, realise his true vocation (as a storymaker/teller), and develop his relationship with Gry. His story thus conforms to the more 'conventional' issues and developmental ideas to be found in most realist adolescent works. However, the motif of a supernatural power which needs to be controlled through his being voluntarily blinded accounts for Orrec's emotional and psychological growth. His blindfolding speaks metaphorically of his willing ignorance of the

situation he finds himself in, and it is only through much testing of his will and patience, contemplation of his true nature, and his eventual courageous rebellion against this suppression that Orrec is able to overcome his fear. This acceptance of himself and of his creative powers of storymaking/telling allows Orrec to move into a more acceptable identity. In this way, the fantasy element of the novel serves as a means to facilitate maturation in the protagonist's character. This fits in with Waller's (2009:20) idea that fantasy allows for the consideration of 'issues of empowerment, alternative perceptions of the world, and the potency of metaphor as a way of representing adolescence'.

The same idea can be applied to Memer in *Voices*, where the fantastical motif of the voice of the Oracle's speaking out against oppression metaphorically suggests that it is Memer who must speak out and empower herself.

In *Powers*, it is the fantastical motif of Gavir's visions/'rememberings' which metaphorically represents his innate power of perception. It is this in which he must learn to place his trust and thus empower himself, and not blindly obey or trust in others who seek to undermine this in him or to use him to their advantage. Metaphor is thus an important narrative technique, and in presenting 'one idea in the terms of another', it 'can expand literal meanings that are not otherwise easily defined or articulated' (Pearce 1996:1-2). In 'The Child and the Shadow', Le Guin (1979a:61) sees Hans Christian Anderson as 'the fabulist who is one of the great realists of literature'. This is because his fairytales are tales 'of psychological realism, radical honesty, the willingness to see and accept the consequences of an act or a failure to act' (Le Guin 1979a:61). Le Guin believes that fantasy does effectively address the concerns of the real world and the responsibilities which come with living in it, and does so in an imaginative and stimulating way, which children and adolescents can easily grasp. Le Guin

(1979b:43) believes that fantasy literature is important and relevant because 'the use of imaginative fiction is to deepen your understanding of your world, and your fellow man, and your own feelings, and your destiny'. In this way, fantasy enables an exploration and expansion of the inner self/mind.

The sociologist, Erik Erikson (1980, cited in Waller 2009:31), argues that 'at each stage [of development] the individual must resolve a conflict in order to progress successfully to the subsequent level of development', a process which takes time. This is perhaps why most stories aimed at children and young adults are *Bildungsromane* since they involve an emotional development over time. And it is the changes which the characters are forced to face during this 'journey' which allow for a maturation in them: '...changes in physical and social arenas force the adolescent to question previous assumptions and develop a clearer sense of who they are, what they believe and what they will become' (Erikson (1980), cited in Waller 2009:31). Thus conflict can be seen as a way of enabling growth. In *Gifts*, Orrec's main conflict is with parental authority. He must learn to assert himself and to oppose his father in the process. In *Voices*, Memer must overcome the 'colonial' authority of the invading Alds. She also needs to learn to integrate with them, and is greatly conflicted by this idea because it has its origins in the messages she receives from the Oracle, a power to which she is linked. In *Powers*, Gavir's conflict involves overcoming the power of his Masters, who represent an authority of ownership. Gavir must learn to disobey, take ownership of himself, and become responsible for his own thinking and actions. It is apparent that Erikson's concepts of conflict as a means of growth and development are relevant to Le Guin's trilogy and to adolescence as a whole.

Trites (2000:x) argues that power 'is even more fundamental to adolescent literature than

growth' because '[w]ithout experiencing gradations between power and powerlessness, the adolescent cannot grow'. Rebellion is part of the process of growth, and it is from this idea that Trites (2000:34) formulates her theory of 'acceptable rebellion' for adolescent protagonists:

> The dynamic of (over)regulation → unacceptable rebellion → repression → acceptable rebellion → transcendence-within-acceptable-limits is a common one in YA novels set at schools....Adolescents have to fail at one form of institutionally proscribed rebellion before they find an institutionally tolerated form of rebellion that paradoxically allows them to remain within the system.

Although Trites formulates her theory based on young adult novels set at schools, it can be applied to any young adult novel which explores authoritative systems and their requirement that adolescent protagonists mature within their guidelines/limits. Trites (2000:48), agreeing with Rosemary Jackson's view on children's literature, posits that most adolescent fiction aims to suppress the possibilities of adolescent power. Trites thus believes that most adolescent literature promotes the idea of 'acceptable rebellion', that is, an act of rebellion that is 'institutionally tolerated'. So, for example, the idea of a peaceful protest or a petition would probably be more institutionally acceptable than an outright riot. This would then allow the protagonist to 'transcend' his/her prior position of repression by the system, and reintegrate into it. However, if the protagonist refuses to move into a space of 'acceptable rebellion' and reintegrate into the system, then the consequences would be severe. An example Trites (2000:4) gives of this is from a young adult novel called *The Chocolate Wars* by Robert Cormier, in which the protagonist, Jerry Renault, is murdered in the end by a school faction against whom he has rebelled (and which has the support of a corrupt adult behind it). Jerry dares to go against their wishes, and pays the price of this rebellion due to the unspoken 'contract repression' that his school and its faction exert over him. Thus Jerry 'is defeated by the novel's end because he has chosen to break the contract and so must be

oppressed by the power structure' (Trites 2000:4). Trites (2000:36) suggests that going against the usual formula of rebellion would normally be detrimental to adolescent protagonists. Thus, she argues that

> ...rebellion is good to a point. It helps adolescents release pent-up energies...But the rebellion is only portrayed as effective in literature as long as it ultimately serves to sustain the status quo on some level. If rebellion goes uncontained, it becomes problematic. (Trites 2000:36)

However, if we apply the above formula to each of Le Guin's protagonists in *The Annals of the Western Shore*, we see that they run counter to Trites's idea of 'acceptable rebellion' and reintegration as the main focus of adolescent literature, which Trites (2000:7) feels is dedicated to showing 'how potentially out-of-control adolescents can learn to exist within institutional structures'.

In *Gifts*, Orrec is (over)regulated by his father's expectation of his gift of unmaking when Canoc tries to pressurise Orrec into displaying it. Orrec then exhibits unacceptable rebellion because he refuses to prove his power, but is then fooled into thinking he has done so by his father. Orrec, believing he has the uncontrollable wild gift, is repressed by his father because he submits to Canoc's suggestion that Orrec be blindfolded. Orrec finally rebels after three years of being blindfolded, but he does not do so in an acceptable way since he defies his father by removing the blindfold despite the danger this could put the Domain in. Furthermore, there is no transcendence-within-acceptable-limits because Orrec chooses not to stay in the family Domain, but rather to leave the Uplands and travel to other parts of the Western Shore to become a renowned 'maker', that is, a poet and storyteller.

In *Voices*, Memer rebels against what she sees as two obstacles. The first, is as an Ansul

citizen under the invading Alds. She is (over)regulated by the Alds who severely restrict and dominate her and her people. Memer hates the Alds and unacceptably rebels by refusing to get to know them or learn anything about them. The Waylord strongly disapproves of Memer's attitude and tries to discourage it, and so represses her in this way. Memer still refuses to befriend or get to know any Alds, especially the Ald adolescent Sim, whom she looks down on as stupid. By the end of the novel, Memer still refuses to respect Ald beliefs and, despite popular opinion, does not believe that Ansul should become a protectorate of theirs. She would rather the city be independent of them. She grudgingly agrees to teach the Ald Gand to read but only on her terms. She thus does not undergo transcendence-within-acceptable-limits and seems to remain sceptical of whether the integration with the Alds will work. Secondly, as a supernaturally gifted person, Memer is frightened by the voice of the ancestral Oracle which speaks through books to her from a young age. This functions to (over)regulate her. Memer rebels unacceptably by refusing to go to the 'shadow end' of the cave where the Oracle resides, or to speak of her fears about this to the Waylord. However, Memer is repressed when the planned Uprising against the Alds requires her to visit the Oracle – something she does due to pressure from the Waylord. However, Memer dislikes speaking on behalf of the Oracle and yet again tries to deny this power in herself, and still rebels in an unacceptable way. Although she eventually gives in to letting the power speak through her, Memer never openly acknowledges this and prefers to focus her attention on her studies. Memer plans to leave Ansul to study under Orrec in Mesun, and so she does not intend to stay long to fulfil any further duties as the voice of the Oracle.

In *Powers*, Gavir is physically enslaved by his masters in Etra and his entire life is (over)regulated by their rules. Gavir eventually rebels by running away and abandoning his masters. During his escape, Gavir must hide out in the wilds, eking out an existence, and

facing severe punishment if caught. In this way he is repressed. However, after encounters with various groups who seek to use or oppress him further, Gavir rebels again and finally reaches Mesun, a university town. Here he becomes a free man and a devoted student under Orrec. He never returns to Etra. Thus it is evident to see that all three protagonists do not necessarily rebel in an acceptable way, mostly because they do not reintegrate into the system against which they initially rebel – Orrec does not reintegrate into Domain family life; Memer continues to resist Ald culture and the Oracle to a certain extent; and Gavir abandons his masters. They thus go against Trites's expectations of a young adult novel. Furthermore, all the protagonists move on to fulfil their dreams and do not meet an untimely demise because of their rebellion. Le Guin thus shows how rebellion can be productive, especially for adolescents, as long as it is not too extreme in nature.

Adolescents create their identities 'through absorption, rejection or "bricolage" of the dominant ideologies and social patterns of their parents or educators' (Waller 2009:6). They thus adapt their identity in various ways which will either encompass or reject whatever they desire (or do not) in terms of identity. It is in the latter idea of rejection where the role of rebellion comes in. According to evolutionary psychology, rebellion has a role to play in making teenagers more adaptive and has made the human race more successful:

> In radical education studies, ultimate evolutionary mechanisms are employed to help defend strategies for teaching,...[f]or example,...John Abbott and Terry Ryan suggest that changes in the human brain at adolescence are crucial for adaptation in the species. These changes force the adolescent to question authority, challenge earlier ways of learning, fear less and risk more: qualities essential in hunter-gatherer society. (Waller 2009:190)

What is being suggested here is that rebellion is in our evolutionary interest. In order for humans to become more nomadic and independent-thinking, they had to learn to question authority and take risks. It was only in this way that they were able to become more adaptable

to the environments which they encountered. This has become so instinctive that modern institutions struggle to contain this inherent trait:

> Abbott and Ryan argue that, in subduing [rebellious] tendencies and attempting to contain them within structured educational institutions, human beings are working against evolutionary psychology and actually creating the kinds of educational and behavioural problems that appear to be rife in schools and on the streets across the Western world. (Waller 2009:190-191)

By trying to curb natural tendencies to rebel, institutions unintentionally create more behavioural problems in our youth. And perhaps what is necessary is access to literature which encourages a healthy form of rebellion, as Le Guin's trilogy quite obviously does. As Waller (2009:14) points out, these radical ideas are exactly what is needed when it comes to theorising young adult literature because of the viewpoint that adolescence is a liminal state in itself: 'A separate critical methodology is necessary in order to theorise young adult literature's very in-between-ness or liminality'. If we apply the evolutionary ideas stated above to Le Guin's protagonists in the *Western Shore* trilogy, we could argue that they are simply evolving as they should through their acts of rebellion:

> [T]he whole idea of teenage delinquency can be revisited and instead of seeing such behaviour amongst teenagers as abnormal, problematic or regressive...an evolutionary psychologist is likely to argue that it is simply an evolutionary trait and...is of use to the human race as a whole. (Waller 2009:191)

It is only through rebelling against authoritative figures that the protagonists are able to test their power in the world and to assert their identity.

Through exerting their power in the world, be it even in 'unacceptable' acts of rebellion, adolescents are showing that there are alternatives, that other options are possible. As Waller (2009:193) points out, in certain novels which explore metamorphosis 'adolescence [can be] represented as the crux for human change, offering curiosity, energy and an almost magical quality that ignites species development'. And so adolescence has an important role to play

in the process of bringing about change. However, it is adolescents' very liminality which poses a threat to institutional systems because it cannot be easily defined or contained:

> [Characters in young adult literature] embody ambivalence, marked out as difference,...they are defined as intolerable by the centrist binary framework of societal classification; they are…the projected sublimation of those aspects of the social and individual consciousness that cannot be tolerated or assimilated. (Wilkie-Stibbs 2006:325)

It is their liminal identities which make adolescents different from children or adults, and this is where their power lies.

According to Trites (2000:52), '[o]nce protagonists of the YA novel have learned to discursively negotiate their place in the domination-repression chain of power, they are usually depicted as having grown, satisfying the conventions of the *Entwicklungsroman*'. Joseph Thomas Love (2005:22) clarifies Trites's use of this category as follows: '...if a protagonist comes of age and is an adult by the end of the book, then the story is a *Bildungsroman*; in an *Entwicklungsroman*, the character does not reach adulthood'. If the protagonists have not yet reached adulthood, they are seen as having to remain in a 'dominating infrastructure' (Love 2005:23) by the end of the novel. Each of the protagonists of the *Western Shore* are narrates his or her own metanarrative in the novels. They look back to a time when they were younger, but they have not reached adulthood by the time the novels end. Yet they have been able to exert a relatively significant amount of power in their lives and have been able to escape the institutions which initially enslaved them. And so, in this sense, Le Guin's novels run counter to what Trites expects of an *Entwicklingroman*. The protagonists seem capable of exerting just as much power over their circumstances as an adult character would be able to by the end of their narratives.

Le Guin's trilogy therefore falls into what Kimberly Reynolds (2007:82) calls 'the third category of contemporary YA fiction', which 'celebrates the coming to power that takes place in adolescence and shows young people as ethical, engaged, and effective'. Thus when 'confronted by...challenges, the characters...prove to be resilient, and the texts hold out a belief that change is necessary and,...possible. This makes purposeful action – whether rebellious or reformative –...meaningful' (Reynolds 2007:82). All three protagonists' purposeful actions come to play a meaningful role in each of their lives. Their 'ethical, engaged, and effected' attitudes may help inspire and empower adolescent readers, and encourage them to take responsibility for creating an identity which is meaningful to them.

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