

國立交通大學

外國文學與語言學研究所

碩士論文

Re-Orienting Power:

A Feminist Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle



權力重置：

娥蘇拉·勒瑰恩之地海傳說的女性閱讀

研究生：魏銘志

指導教授：馮品佳 教授

中華民國九十六年七月

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研究生：魏銘志

Student: Ming-chih Wei

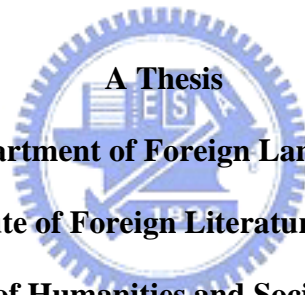
指導教授：馮品佳

Advisor: Pin-chia Feng

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國立交通大學外國文學與語言學研究所文學組碩士班

中文摘要

本文探討娥蘇拉·勒瑰恩(Ursula K. Le Guin)在地海傳說後三部曲中呈現的轉變，以及地海世界中的權力重置如何展露勒瑰恩逐漸萌發的女性意識。本研究的主要文本即為地海系列的六部曲：《地海巫師》、《地海古墓》、《地海彼岸》、《地海孤雛》、《地海故事集》、《地海奇風》。

第一章試圖論證地海首三部曲受制於英雄敘事的傳統，其中設定的魔法世界實為一高度父權化的社會。然而，隨著第四部曲的出版，地海世界逐漸有所改變。於是第一章末段將專究勒瑰恩在《地海孤雛》中傳達的訊息，包括對地海世界之階級建構的不信任和女性觀點的反思。

第二章針對第五部曲進行文本分析。《地海故事集》挑戰且進而推翻了地海中既定的權力及性別架構，因此本章欲解讀勒瑰恩如何解構該奇幻世界中的父權階級和文化。

第三章以《地海故事集》的末篇故事〈蜻蜓〉揭序，此中篇小說扮演了第五部曲和第六部曲的橋樑。隨後，本章將檢視《地海奇風》中父權體制的崩解和民主秩序的崛起；此權力結構的轉變除了引領地海邁向一自由、民主和平等的國度，也隱含了勒瑰恩對現實世界的反省和期盼。

關鍵字：娥蘇拉·勒瑰恩、地海、奇幻文學、青少年文學、女性閱讀、英雄敘事、巫術、階級、父權、龍、《地海巫師》、《地海古墓》、《地海彼岸》、《地海孤雛》、《地海故事集》、《地海奇風》

Re-Placing Power: A Feminist Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle

Student: Ming-chih Wei

Advisor: Dr. Pin-chia Feng

Graduate Institute of Foreign Literatures and Linguistics
National Chiao Tung University

Abstract

The thesis attempts to probe into how Ursula K. Le Guin re-discovers the Earthsea world in the latest three novels and how the power shifts in the Earthsea Cycle manifest her evolving feminist awareness. The main texts that the thesis deals with are Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle, which includes *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), *The Farthest Shore* (1972), *Tehanu* (1990), *Tales from Earthsea* (2001), and *The Other Wind* (2001).

In the first chapter, I argue that the Earthsea world represented in the first trilogy is highly patriarchal for the first three novels are centered on the hero tales to a great extent. With the appearance of the fourth book, Earthsea is gradually changing, however. In the end of the first chapter, the discussion will therefore concentrate on *Tehanu*, in which Le Guin begins to show her feminist reflection and her distrust of the wizardly world-building.

The fifth book, *Tales from Earthsea*, provides quite a few pivotal elements that challenge and even subvert the seemingly rigid power structure and gender construction in the first trilogy. As a result, the main task of the second chapter is to decipher how Le Guin deconstructs the artificial hierarchy and the male-dominated culture in the wizardly world.

In the beginning of the third chapter, I read "Dragonfly," the last story in *Tales*, as the bridge between the fifth and the sixth volumes. Then, I proceed with an investigation into the sixth book—*The Other Wind*. In *Wind*, the wizardly hierarchy finally collapses and Earthsea is going toward a democratic order that promises equality among all. To conclude, the shifts between the first and the second trilogies are in fact the movement from an order of oppression to that of freedom, which faithfully projects Le Guin's reflection upon and expectations for the real world.

Key Words: Ursula K. Le Guin, Earthsea, Fantasy literature, Young adult literature, Feminist reading, Hero-tale, Wizardry, Hierarchy, Patriarchy, Dragons, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan*, *The Farthest Shore*, *Tehanu*, *Tales from Earthsea*, *The Other Wind*

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Finally, I want to thank my family: my grandmother, my mother, my sister, my nephew and Kai, all of whom are constant inspirations to me. But for their unconditional love and support, I couldn't have insisted on the pursuit of knowledge. I am so fortunate and grateful to have them always beside me.

願將此作獻給我的父親，謝謝他對我的堅信；雖然來不及讓他看到論文的完成，他默默的關愛，直到現在，仍支持著我繼續前進。

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Introduction

This thesis attempts to delve into the apparent power shifts between the first and the second trilogies in Ursula K. Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle and hopes to decipher how Le Guin weaves her feminist reflection into her representation of the magical world. To be specific, these shifts manifest the movement from a hierarchical order to a democratic one in the fictional world. Moreover, they also feature Le Guin's evolving feminist awareness and suggest her expectations for the real world. In brief, I intend to research how Le Guin revises Earthsea by re-orienting power and read the second Earthsea trilogy as a feminist revision of the first one. The main texts that the thesis deals with are Le Guin's Earthsea Cycle, which consists of six books, including *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971), *The Farthest Shore* (1972), *Tehanu* (1990), *Tales from Earthsea* (2001), and *The Other Wind* (2001). Among them, *Wizard*, *Tombs* and *Shore* are regarded as the first trilogy while *Tehanu*, *Tales* and *Wind* as the second trilogy. The approach of the thesis is to combine Le Guin's feminist thoughts as displayed in her non-fiction pieces¹ with a textual analysis

¹ Some of the critical essays from Le Guin's non-fiction collections—*The Language of the Night* (1979) and *Dancing at the Edge of the World* (1989)—will be discussed because these pieces serve to clarify Le Guin's feminist perspectives. In addition, citations from Le Guin's *Earthsea Revisioned* (1993) will play a significant part in the thesis as well. The content of *Earthsea Revisioned* is originally a lecture that Le Guin presented under the title—*Children, Women, Men and Dragons*—on August 7th, 1992 at *Worlds Apart*, an institute sponsored by Children's Literature New England and held at Keble College, Oxford University, England. The significance of this chapbook is that it reveals the problematics of gender issues and explains the necessity of a revision of the accepted masculine principles in the first trilogy.

of the Earthsea novels because it is important not only to note the changes of the power structure in Earthsea but to show the author's ever-growing feminist mind, which prompts her to revise the wizardly world so as to provide a textual revision of the male-dominated hierarchy.

The fundamental problem of the first Earthsea trilogy lies in the fact that it is based on the conventions of heroic fantasy.² To be precise, the first three books are centered on the hero-tale,³ in which "heroism has been gendered: The hero is a man...[while] women are not heroes...[and] are seen in relation to heroes: as mother, wife, seducer, beloved, victim, or rescuable maiden" (*Revised* 5). Hence, the first trilogy is mostly about men and their stories. Except for Tenar in *Tombs*, there is no other major female protagonist in the first trilogy. Tenar is a heroine, instead of a hero, though. Unlike the heroes, a heroine "is not a free agent" because "when the hero comes, she becomes complementary to him" (*Revised* 9). In addition, although Le Guin tried to lay emphasis on womanhood through the community of women in *Tombs*, she did not succeed in this attempt. As she admitted in *Earthsea Revised*, "[c]ommunities of men in Earthsea are defined as powerful, active, and

² According to the definition in *Fantasy*, heroic fantasy or high fantasy "describes classic tales of knights, dragons, wizards, and magic"; besides, it "is typically set in a medieval world and often contains many of the archetypal images and myths associated with worldwild folk legend, such as elves, goblins, dragons, and wizards" (14).

³ In light of Le Guin in *Earthsea Revised*, the heroic fantasy is the modern form of the hero tale (5). Specifically, "the hero-tale has concerned the establishment or validation of manhood" and its theme is always associated with "a quest, or a conquest, or a test, or a contest...conflict and sacrifice" (5). Besides, "[a]rchetypal configurations of the hero-tale are the hero...and often the night sea journey, the wicked witch, the wounded king, the devouring mother, the wise old man, and so on" (5).

autonomous; the community of women in Atuan is described as obedient to distant male rulers, a static, closed society”; moreover, “[n]o change can come, nothing can be done, until a man arrives...[and] originates the action of the book” (9). Tenar and the other female protagonists in *Tombs* are subjected to the binary cultural conditioning—men dominate while women obey. In this sense, the first trilogy is still entrapped in the dualistic tradition of the hero-tale.

Even so, Le Guin did not totally succumb to the tradition; on the contrary, she has made subversive attempts to challenge the rigid tradition in the first trilogy. In spite of the gender-biased wizardly hierarchy in Earthsea, Le Guin made her hero, Ged, dark-skinned and thus made him an outsider in the heroic tradition, in which heroes are supposed to be fair-skinned white male. Namely, Le Guin was clearly aware of the influence that the heroic tradition had upon her; therefore, in the writing process of the first trilogy, she “was writing partly by the rules, as an artificial man, and partly against the rules, as an inadvertent revolutionary” (*Revised* 7). That Le Guin could only push against the limits within the tradition to a certain degree indicates the dilemma of being a female writer. As a writer, it is extremely hard for Le Guin to reject tradition since it “frames your thinking and puts winged words in your mouth”; without tradition, the writer will “lose that wonderful fluency...[and be] not able to speak with authority” (*Revised* 10). For women writers, it is even

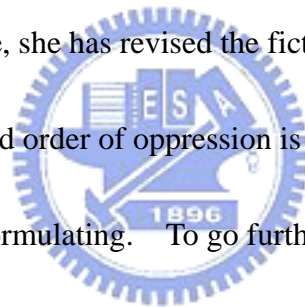
harder not to follow tradition. They are conditioned to “write with authority” only by staying “within a traditional role” for “authority is still granted and withheld by the institutions and traditions of men” (*Revised* 10). For this reason, I would argue that Le Guin has projected the difficulties of being a *woman* writer onto Earthsea, where the female characters are in a similar predicament. In other words, the hierarchical order in the first trilogy is actually a reference to and a reflection of the real world.

Fortunately, things change both in the fictional and the real worlds though the changing process is very time-consuming. Thanks to the development of feminism, the hierarchical power structure and the patriarchal gender construction are no longer regarded as inherent but artificial constructs that may be changed. In this way, Le Guin is able to depart from the hero tale and then break through the dualistic divisions in the second trilogy. The center of the thesis is, therefore, to probe into how Le Guin revises Earthsea, gets it out of the wizardly hierarchy and equips it with an order of freedom. In the first chapter, the thesis will start with a brief introduction of the author and the Earthsea Cycle and then focus on a textual analysis of the first three books in order to prove that the first trilogy is derived from the conventions of hero-tale so that the magical world is highly hierarchical. With the publication of the second trilogy, Earthsea is gradually changing, however. I will therefore bring the

fourth book, *Tehanu*, into discussion in the last part of the first chapter. Distinct from the previous images in the first trilogy, Earthsea becomes very different in the perspective of a middle-aged woman, through which Le Guin starts to provoke feminist reflection on its hierarchical order. *Tehanu*, in this sense, is a crucial transition in the Earthsea Cycle. That Earthsea is actually founded upon a man-made wizardly hierarchy is unfolded explicitly in the fifth book—*Tales from Earthsea*. Since Roke School is the centralized authority that holds the hierarchical order together, its deconstruction will help accelerate the collapse of the wizardly hierarchy. Hence in the second chapter, I intend to deconstruct and subvert Roke School by means of a textual analysis of the short stories in *Tales*. At the beginning of the third chapter, the last story in *Tales*, “Dragonfly,” will be highlighted as a bridge between the fifth and the sixth books. Finally, I will concentrate on analyzing *The Other Wind*—the currently last volume in the Earthsea Cycle. In addition to deconstructing the wizardly hierarchy, Le Guin leads Earthsea to an order of freedom that guarantees equality to all people in *Wind*. And this new democratic order in the fictional world, to a great extent, coincides with Le Guin’s expectations for the real world. In short, Le Guin has put an end to the monopoly of power in the first trilogy and evenly re-placed power in the second trilogy.

To conclude, the Earthsea Cycle not only shows Le Guin’s change of mind in

terms of heroic tradition but is closely connected with the real world. When the first trilogy was written in late 1960s and early 1970s, Le Guin could not get rid of the heroic tradition yet, so Earthsea was made following the patriarchal tradition. But it does not mean that Le Guin believes in the dualistic gender divisions in which the male-dominated culture is rooted. What she represented in the first trilogy, including the marginalization or the stigmatization of the repressed minorities, were all facts whether in Earthsea or in the real world. However, Le Guin is not satisfied with reporting facts. With the development of her feminist mind, Le Guin felt uneasy about the first trilogy. Hence, she has revised the fictional world by adding the second trilogy, in which the old order of oppression is gradually tumbling down while the new order of freedom is formulating. To go further, the changes that Earthsea has experienced could also be regarded as the guides to overthrowing the unbalanced power relation in reality. Although Le Guin introduces a democratic order in Earthsea, she does not clearly indicate what it looks like because she has no wish to meddle in its transformation. So, instead of settling down to a final version, Earthsea is still changing. And the result is a visionary freedom; as she concluded in the end of *Earthsea Revisioned*, “I didn’t want to leave Ged and Tenar and their dragon-child safe. I wanted to leave them free” (26).



Chapter 1

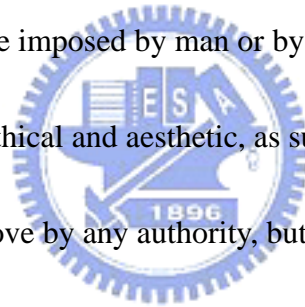
Hero Tales in the First Trilogy

Ursula K. Le Guin (born in Berkeley, California, on October 21st, 1929) is one of the most outstanding writers in contemporary American literature. Le Guin's father, Alfred Kroeber (1876-1960), was a distinguished anthropologist and her mother, Theodora Kroeber (1897-1979) was a writer. Being raised in such a scholarly family, Le Guin was endowed with access to knowledge of diverse cultures and, consequently, a creative mind. With this background, it seems less shocking to know that she has accomplished great achievements in her writing career.⁴ Le Guin is well-versed in various genres, such as science fiction, fantasy, children literature, poetry, screenplays, etc. Besides, she is a self-claimed feminist and a brilliant thinker whose essays are always thought-provoking. Although Le Guin's works, just like her multiple identities in literature, represent a curious mixture, she is best-known for her science fiction and fantasy novels, among which the Earthsea Cycle stands out and attracts great attention. As is mentioned, the Earthsea series contains six volumes. There are apparently two gaps among the publications of the Earthsea novels. The first three books were published in a row and had been generally

⁴ Le Guin has won numerous literary awards, including four Nebula Awards, five Hugo Awards, a National Book Award and many others.

accepted as the Earthsea trilogy for many years. Surprisingly, Le Guin published the fourth book, *Tehanu* with a subtitle—*the Last Book of Earthsea*, almost two decades later.⁵ Then, two more Earthsea novels came out in the new millennium and formed the second trilogy. In an essay named “Dreams Must Explain Themselves,” Le Guin illuminates her Taoist philosophy and writing attitude:

This attitude toward action, creation, is evidently a basic one, the same root from which the interest in the *I Ching* and Taoist philosophy evident in most of my books series. The Taoist world is orderly, not chaotic, but its order is not one imposed by man or by a personal or human deity. The true laws—ethical and aesthetic, as surely as scientific—are not imposed from above by any authority, but exist in things and are to be found—discovered. (*Language* 44)



For Le Guin, writing a novel is all about discovering or exploring, instead of inventing. Therefore, it is understandable why it takes her so many years to publish the last three Earthsea books since “[d]iscovery is a temporal process” (*Language* 44). But the question is: What are the new discoveries that motivate Le Guin to add three

⁵ After Le Guin finished *Shore* in 1972, she knew that “there should be a fourth book of Earthsea” because “traditional definitions and values of masculinity and femininity [in the first trilogy] were all in question” (*Earthsea Revised* 11). But she could not put her feminist reflection into words until 16 years later. So, it took her almost two decades to publish the fourth book—*Tehanu*, whose working title is *Better Late Than Never* (*Language* 51). Although Le Guin gave *Tehanu* a subtitle—The Last Book of Earthsea, she regretted later on and knew there should be new stories to be told in Earthsea. Hence, she confessed in the “Forward” to the fifth book, *Tales from Earthsea*, that the subtitle was a mistake since she “foolishly assume[d] that the story of Ged and Tenar had reached its happily-ever-after [in *Tehanu*]” (xiii).

more books to the Earthsea series while the Earthsea trilogy has long been widely recognized as a whole? The fourth book, *Tehanu*, is a transition in the whole Earthsea Cycle. Compared with the first three books, its theme, narrative and even main protagonists are very different. But before the discussion on the sudden shift in *Tehanu*, I would like to make a thorough analysis of the first trilogy.

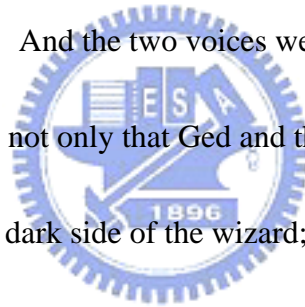
Similar to her other fictional works, the Earthsea Cycle also involves world-building, which is always purposeful to Le Guin. In 1967, Herman Schein, the publisher of Parnassus Press, asked her to write a novel for adolescent readers. Since then, according to Le Guin's account in "Dream Must Explain Themselves," her imagination had led her to the magical world and to the coming-of-age story of a young wizard—*A Wizard of Earthsea*. "The story of the book [*Wizard*]," as she narrates, "is essentially a voyage" (*Language* 46) because the coming-of-age process—the main occupation of the teens—is like a journey to one's complete self, including the positive and the negative sides. Furthermore, as Le Guin states in another essay, "The Child and the Shadow," "most of the great works of fantasy are about that journey"; therefore, it appears to Le Guin that "fantasy is the medium best suited to a description to that journey" (*Language* 61). Also in "Dreams Must Explain Themselves," Le Guin specifies the themes of her first three Earthsea books respectively (*Language* 50). In general, the first trilogy aims at young adult readers,

so it mainly focuses on the “coming-of-age” subject even if each of the three novels has its own additional themes. Obviously, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, which deals with both the positive and the negative qualities of a young wizard—Ged, is a classical male *Bildungsroman*. However, *The Tombs of Atuan*, a female coming-of-age story, has gender as a crucial theme and shows a different perspective of a female protagonist—Tenar. As for *The Farthest Shore*, it’s a coming-of-age story of a young prince, Arren, who needs to face the acceptance of death before he reaches maturity.

In addition to the coming-of-age theme, the first trilogy also reflects Carl Gustav Jung’s influence on Le Guin. *A Wizard of Earthsea* is a story of recollection about how Ged, the last Roke Archmage, becomes a great wizard. Ged, whose use-name is Sparrowhawk, was born in a small village called Ten Alders on Gont Island. He showed his wizardly talent when he was still very young; therefore, he was soon sent to stay with Ogion, the only mage on Gont, as an apprentice. But Ogion’s slow way of teaching could not satisfy the young man’s strong desire for knowledge. Ged then decided to go to the wizardly school on Roke Island for further wizardly study. After Ged entered Roke School, his diligence and genius granted him excellence in every magical subject while his arrogance and competitiveness got him into trouble. In order to prove that he had the most eminent



wizardly skills among all students, Ged misused magic, opened the gate between the living and the dead and then accidentally released a powerful shapeless shadow that endangered the equilibrium of Earthsea. At first, Ged was too afraid to face the shadow, so he kept escaping from it and looking for any possible method of destroying the shadow. It took him quite a while to realize that he must accept the shadow for the sake of restoring the balance of the magical world. In the last chapter of *Wizard*, the wizard and the shadow finally met face to face; “Ged spoke the shadow’s name and in the same moment the shadow spoke without lips or tongue, saying the same word: ‘Ged.’ And the two voices were one voice” (*Wizard* 194).



This last confrontation reveals not only that Ged and the shadow share the same name but also that the shadow is the dark side of the wizard; thus when “Ged reached out his hands, dropping his staff, and took hold of his shadow, of the black self that reached out to him. Light and darkness met, and joined, and were one” (*Wizard* 194).

In “The Child and the Shadow,” Le Guin presents her understanding of Jung’s concept of the shadow archetype. According to Le Guin’s interpretation, the shadow is “all we don’t want to, can’t, admit into our conscious self, all the qualities and tendencies within us which have been repressed, denied, or not used” (*Language* 59). In other words, the shadow stands for one’s repressed self and is the key to the Jungian

collective unconscious.⁶ In order to reach the wholeness, one must follow his own shadow, which is the only way to re-connect the conscious with the unconscious, since “[t]he shadow stands on the threshold between the conscious and the unconscious mind” (*Language* 59). Therefore, in the end Ged did not destroy his shadow; on the contrary, he integrated it by sharing it with his own name and receiving it as part of himself. Once the integration is complete, Ged can finally make himself whole. This final confrontation and integration between Ged and his shadow reflect Jung’s notion of individuation.⁷ It could be concluded that *A Wizard of Earthsea* is an experiment on Jung’s concept of the shadow archetype and that of individuation.



The second book of the Earthsea trilogy, *The Tombs of Atuan*, tells a story about

⁶ According to Jung in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, “The hypothesis of a collective unconscious belongs to the class of ideas that people at first find strange but soon come to possess and use as familiar conceptions” (3). For Jung, the idea of the collective unconscious is in fact the same case with the notion of the unconscious, which can be used to refer to “the state of repressed or forgotten contents” (3). Furthermore, Jung relates, “A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal,” so he calls it “personal unconscious” (3). However, “this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn”; hence, he calls the deeper layer “the collective unconscious” (3). The reason why Jung has termed it “collective” is that “this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal”; in addition, “in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals” (3-4). That is to say, the collective unconscious is “identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us” (4).

⁷ Jung uses “the term ‘individuation’ to denote the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (275). According to Jung, life can be divided into two stages: the natural phase and the cultural phase. In the first half of life, namely, the natural phase, an individual must get to know the external world, while the main task for the second half of life is internal. That is to say, one must go deeper to the inner part and keep the door to the unconscious open. Jung also believes that every human being is inwardly complete, only most of us have long lost the connection with the unconscious part in the process of the external task. In order to reach the wholeness of the psyche, one must integrate the shadow, which symbolizes the repressed unconscious. The concept of individuation refers exactly to the process of harmonizing the conscious and the unconscious. Since the teenage stage is the transition between the natural and cultural phases, adolescents must experience the process of individuation and learn to cope with it before they reach true maturity. (“Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation” in *Archetypes* 275-89)

Tenar, a high priestess, whose life was dedicated to the Nameless Ones, that is, Nature, on an isolated island called Atuan in the eastern peripherals of Earthsea—the Kargad Empire. Being the high priestess, the teenage Tenar was given exclusive access to the dark labyrinth below the temple yet had to sacrifice her freedom in exchange for the privilege. Ged’s presence in the second half of the novel, however, gave her an opportunity to lead a different life. Ged’s mission was to find and unite the missing half of the sign of peace—the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, which was hidden in Tenar’s labyrinth, because the recovery of the Ring could help Earthsea regain its balance.

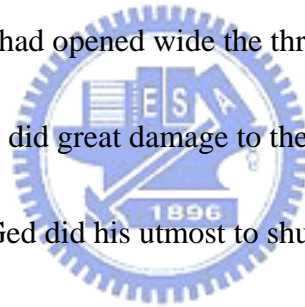
At first, Tenar, regarding the Hardic wizard as an intruder and thief, was very hostile to Ged. Even so, Tenar only imprisoned Ged in the labyrinth, instead of killing him, for she had lived in the tombs since very young and never seen any outsider. Her curiosity over the prisoner increased and so did her visits to him. During her visits, they talked about each other and Ged provided her all kinds of information about the whole Earthsea world and its people, of which she had no knowledge at all. It is these conversations that gradually change Tenar. As a result, Tenar chose to turn away from the nameless gods she served and then escaped from the island with Ged later on. In the end, Ged, with Tenar’s assistance, accomplished his mission and they brought the complete ring back to Havnor—the capital island of the Archipelago.

Same with *Wizard*, this novel is also highly Jungian. Jung claims that all men have

the anima, the female component in a male psyche, and all women have the animus, an equivalent male component in a female psyche, while the anima and the animus are mostly repressed; in order to reach the wholeness, a man needs to awaken and accept the anima in him and vice versa (270-71). Following Jung's concept, Craig and Diana Barrow claim that "Ged as prisoner and teacher practices the care and responsibility of love, exercising his anima" while "Tenar...learns the recognition and responsibility of self from her animus" (32-33). The Barrows suggest that Tenar symbolizes Ged's anima while Ged stands for Tenar's animus and consequently their encounter, as well as the recovery of the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, represents a psychic integration. In this sense, *Tombs* could be regarded as an allegory of the psychic integration. Besides, *The Tombs of Atuan* also highlights the necessity of a female coming-of-age story in the Earthsea series. Gender is not a focus of attention in *Wizard*; as a result, readers, before *Tombs* came out, might have an idea that *Wizard* represents a universal coming-of-age process for both sexes, regardless of what the choice of a male protagonist may imply. The appearance of *Tombs* offers a different perspective of a female protagonist and broadens the horizons of the Earthsea series with gender issues. That is to say, *Wizard* can only reflect part of the truth in the coming-of-age phase because it neglects the inherent gender differences. It is then definitely necessary to have *Tombs* as a supplement to the Earthsea series, enhancing

the significance of femininity in the process of one's psychic integration or the harmonization of all creation—in Le Guin's term, the equilibrium⁸ (*Wizard* 52).

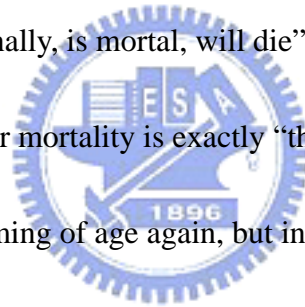
The third book in the Earthsea series, *The Farthest Shore*, is another male coming-of-age story. Now being the Archmage of Earthsea, namely the highest wizard in the magical world, Ged took on a journey with the young prince Arren, who was destined to be the king of all islands in the near future, and tried to put an end to the disturbance that threatened the equilibrium of Earthsea. After a series of failures, they finally discovered that the disturbing force could be traced to the Land of the Dead. A wizard named Cob had opened wide the threshold between life and death out of his fear of dying, which did great damage to the equilibrium. In order to restore balance to the world, Ged did his utmost to shut the opening at the expense of his wizardly power. Afterwards, Ged was too weak to even stay awake, so Arren must, for the very first time in his life, find them a way back to the living world all on his own. This last journey, aiming at transforming young Arren into a grown man capable of performing independent tasks, proves to be successful. After making it back to the living land, Arren was crowned the first king of all Earthsea in around five



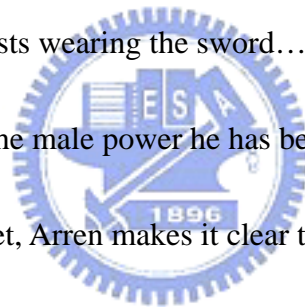
⁸ Equilibrium, which refers to the balance of all things, is a repetitive hypothesis and theme in the Earthsea Cycle. It is assumed that “[o]n every act the balance of the whole depends” because “all...act [is] within the Equilibrium” (*Shore* 87). In *Wizard*, Ogion, who avoids using any magical spells to disturb the circulation of nature, is the most religious practitioner of the idea. Being influenced by Ogion, Ged instructs Arren that “do nothing because it is righteous or praiseworthy or noble to do; do nothing because it seems good to do so; do only that which you must do and which you cannot do in any other way” (*Shore* 87). However, in the second chapter of my thesis, I will point out the problematics of the so-called equilibrium in the first trilogy and argue that it is not the true balance of all beings for it hinged upon the male-dominated wizardly hierarchy.

hundred years as the prophecy promised and Ged foresaw. Ged, on the other hand, lost all his wizardly power and was carried on a dragon's back to his hometown.

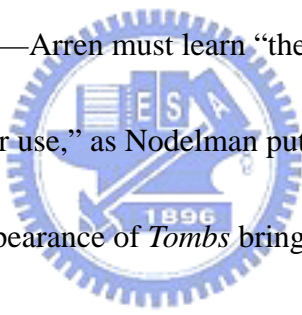
Although *Shore*, like *Wizard*, is also a male coming-of-age story, it is not redundant to have it in the trilogy for there are indeed some crucial distinctions between *Wizard* and *Shore*. For one thing, *Shore* has death as its main theme, which is “about the thing you do not live through and survive” (*Language* 50), as Le Guin puts it, while *Wizard* or *Tombs* are about things that either Ged or Tenar has lived through and then survived. For Le Guin, the purpose of *Shore* is not to reveal “that death exists...but that he/she, personally, is mortal, will die” (*Language* 50). The moment when a child realizes his or her mortality is exactly “the hour when childhood ends, and the new life begins. Coming of age again, but in a larger context” (*Language* 50). That is to say, *Shore*, corresponding to *Wizard* or *Tombs*, also attempts to probe into the same coming-of-age subject, only from a very different point of view—death. Once again, *Shore*, like the other two books in the trilogy, proves that there are several significant lessons for adolescents to learn in this phase and the acceptance of death is no exception. For another, Ged in *Wizard* and Arren in *Shore* are quite different characters in many ways. Holly Littlefield comments on the main characters of Earthsea trilogy and indicates their difference from the other heroes in traditional fantasy novels. “In a genre dominated by macho-man heroes,” she points out, “the



main characters of Earthsea are clearly misfit....They are thoughtful, reflective, and often fallible” (247). Generally speaking, Ged and Arren, with the above-mentioned attributes, do not appropriately serve as the traditional hero figure, let alone Tenar because a heroine is even rarer. Compared with Ged, Arren can hardly be a hero. Perry Nodelman brings up quite a few insights into Arren’s personality and distinguishes between Ged and Arren. To begin with, Nodelman points out the significance of two phallic symbols respectively in *Wizard* and *Shore*, Ged’s staff and Arren’s sword: “Whereas Ged confronts his shadow by wielding the phallic sign of his power, his staff, Arren resists wearing the sword...and for a time carries a small knife instead—a rejection of the male power he has been fated to wield” (195). When Arren and Ged first meet, Arren makes it clear that his given name precisely signifies “sword” in the dialect of his land. In addition, the sword he carries is the royal family heirloom. Prince Arren, being the heir to the throne, is endowed with the sword obviously due to the great expectations from his people. As a result, I would argue that turning his back on the sword, a phallic symbol, implies not only Arren’s rejection of his royal identity and duty but also his resistance to the patriarchal order. Moreover, Nodelman claims, “Le Guin further reinforces the femininity of the role Arren plays by placing him in situations traditionally occupied in fiction by females” (196). In order to strengthen his argument, Nodelman discusses the



kidnapping scene that happens to Arren, trying to illustrate the prince's femininity, "Enslaved by a cruel villain, he [Arren] is like a typical damsel in his distress, helpless to do anything himself about his 'bonds' until he is saved by Ged, whose 'grip' on his arm replaces the chains and pulls him to safety" (196). From this point of view, Arren is so similar to some helpless female protagonists in fairy tales, who are always waiting for a knight to rescue them, that readers might find it confusing to consider Arren the king-to-be. Therefore, Arren needs to learn how to be a king before he becomes one. In short, *Shore* is Arren's coming-of-age story; throughout the novel, there is this repeating message—Arren must learn "the ordering nature of male power and its need to define its proper use," as Nodelman puts it (195).



Briefly speaking, the appearance of *Tombs* brings up the gender issue in Earthsea series, and the publication of *Shore* continues the same issue. Before *Tombs* came out, readers could scarcely pay any attention to Ged's masculinity and its relation to power. In the end of *Wizard*, Ged claims the shadow to be the dark side of himself by calling it his own name. Ever since his integration with his darkness, Ged has obtained great power and gradually become the most influential wizard in the magical world. However, Tenar's story shows quite a different version. In order to acquire her freedom, Tenar must abandon everything she has ever known. After she succeeds in escaping from the underground maze, she goes to live with Ged's tutor,

Ogion the Silent, and breaks off any connection with the past. To be precise, Tenar sacrifices her status as the high priestess for nothing personal but her freedom.

Unlike Ged, who turns more and more powerful and rises all the way up to the position of the Archmage, Tenar, who used to be the high priestess, degenerates into just an ordinary woman. In a way, Ged's story and Tenar's seem to complement each other: The masculine coming-of-age story is about the process of moving up from the bottom; the feminine one is about the process of going down. While it might be considered that *Wizard* and *Tombs* represent a symbolic integration of two sexes, I can't help but wonder why the masculine coming-of-age experience is conditioned to be achieving success and vice versa.



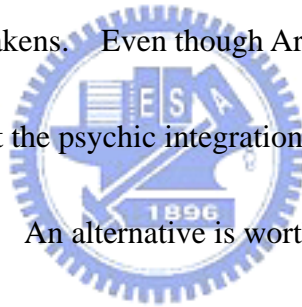
Both the assumptions of gender roles in *Wizard* and *Tombs* are to the extremes. On the one hand, it is next to impossible to identify any feminine qualities in Ged, in addition to his regular reflection and deliberation, although he does not perfectly fit into the traditional masculine hero figure. On the other hand, in spite of her nobility and courage, Tenar is not so different from traditional women who are conditioned to be obedient. In this sense, *Wizard* and *Tombs* respectively represent an absolute masculine and a feminine coming-of-age story. Even if *Wizard* and *Tombs* together may symbolize the integration of masculinity and femininity, Ged and Tenar, after all, are two individuals whose masculine or feminine qualities are restrained. It is the

absoluteness of the masculine or feminine experience that imposes limitations on the narratives themselves. In other words, having a pure masculine or feminine protagonist is to limit the possibilities that the story itself can represent. Therefore, the appearance of *Shore*, in my opinion, seems to fill the gap by displaying some more possibilities between two extremes. To be specific, Arren's personality features an interesting mixture that can be clearly found neither in Ged nor in Tenar. This mixture arouses a great curiosity: What will happen if masculinity and femininity combine in the same person? Namely, will there be conflicts or just a smooth integration?



Le Guin probes into the issue about the integration of masculine and feminine qualities through Arren's coming-of-age story. Her attempt, conceivably, is to mark the importance of the hidden feminine qualities in a man. For one thing, it is more acceptable to make Arren, who springs from the well-sheltered royal family, have apparent feminine qualities. Hence, Arren's destiny to become the king of all Earthsea could be regarded as an allegory of the balance between masculine and feminine principles—another form of equilibrium. As Nodelman puts it, "Arren is a 'girlish lad' who seems androgynous and whose destiny as high king over all might well represent psychic individuation and wholeness" (184). For another, the choice of the young prince could be questionable, though. One of the most significant

lessons for Arren in *Shore* is to learn how to make good use of the male ordering power appropriately, which includes, in a metaphorical sense, using a sword. No matter whether Arren excels at using a sword, the moment he pulls it out of the sheath, he is not just wielding the sword but, more importantly, submitting to the patriarchal order. Regardless of his feminine qualities, Arren is still expected to grow up and become a “real” man—a hero figure. On his way to the crown, he has been, by means of various physical or mental ordeals, transformed into a mature man who can take the responsibility of being a king. Under this transformation, his masculinity strengthens yet femininity weakens. Even though Arren is unlike the traditional hero figure, is he suited to represent the psychic integration after he successfully meets all the standards of being a king? An alternative is worth pondering: Were Arren a princess, could she have chosen a different path? That is to say, granted that Le Guin attempts to mold Arren into a less macho figure, the gender role imposed on him cannot be left out of consideration. If he could stand for the wholeness, he would lead the magical world to its equilibrium. In the end of *Shore*, Arren finally reaches maturity and is crowned to be the king of all Earthsea. It seems that Arren, whose true name is Lebannen, has the ability to bring the long lost equilibrium back to the magical world without Ged’s help. The following sequels to the Earthsea trilogy prove the above presumption wrong, however. Almost two decades later, Le Guin



decided to write *Tehanu*. At the beginning of this fourth Earthsea book, the magical world is still imbalanced, which implies Arren's failure. In other words, Lebannen alone cannot restore balance to Earthsea because the assumptions posed in the first trilogy apparently have flaws. However, specifically what is wrong with the first trilogy?

First of all, Le Guin's representations of the female protagonists in the first trilogy are problematic for these interpretations have underestimated women's value and significance in the magical world. In light of Sarah Lefanu's analysis in

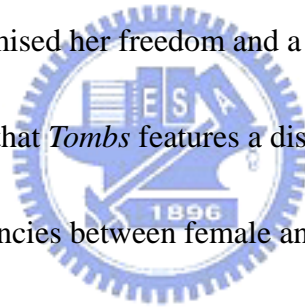
Feminism and Science Fiction, most female characters in the first three Earthsea books are depicted, on the one hand, as wicked witches or ignorant peasant women; on the other hand, women are simply dead, like Elfarran,⁹ or absent from the main plot, like Ged's mother.¹⁰ Even if *Tombs* focuses on the female coming-of-age

experience and "girls get a rather better deal..." as Lefanu states, "they do need

⁹ Elfarran, who is called "the fair lady of the *Deed of Enlad*" (*Wizard* 65), is a legendary figure in an ancient Earthsea epic. The only description about Elfarran in *Wizard* is that "[s]he died a thousand years ago, her bones lie afar under the Sea of Éa, and maybe there never was such a woman" (*Wizard* 65). Elfarran is first mentioned in *Wizard* because she is the dead spirit that Ged tries to summon in a private contest with a senior student named Jasper. Although the consequences of summoning Elfarran are many, the most serious one is to release the shadow that haunts Ged in the second half of the novel. In addition, Le Guin elaborates on Elfarran's story in "A Description of Earthsea" of the fifth book. King Morred met beautiful Elfarran on an island called Soléa and fell in love with her. In order to prove his love, Morred gave her an arm ring, that is the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, as the engagement gift and soon they got married. However, Elfarran's another pursuer, the Wandlord, was jealous of their union and decided to take her back by all means. The battle between Morred and the Wandlord lasted for years. In the end, Morred and his enemy had their last fight on the Sea of Éa. The fight was so fierce that both of them died in the sea. But before the Wandlord died, he cast a spell and flooded the Soléa Island, where Elfarran took shelter. At last, the Soléa Island sank into the sea and Elfarran was dead by drowning, too. Fortunately, the son of Morred and Elfarran, who was given the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, survived and continued the royal blood. (*Tales from Earthsea* 260-63)

¹⁰ Ged was raised by his single father because his mother passed away within the year that she gave birth to him. (*Wizard* 2)

rescuing” (132). Take Tenar, the only leading female protagonist in the first trilogy, for instance. She was designated to be the high priestess of the Nameless Ones when she was only eight months old. Ever since then, it seems that Tenar had been fated to serve the Old Powers and to stay in the tombs for all her life. Being hypnotized into believing that she was the chosen one, Tenar gradually identified with her duties as the high priestess and forgot her longing for freedom. Then Ged appeared and acquainted Tenar with the knowledge about the outer world, which stimulated her to reconsider the meaning of her being. At last, she made up her mind to escape from the tombs with Ged, who promised her freedom and a brand new life. Briefly speaking, it cannot be denied that *Tombs* features a distinctive female coming-of-age story and unfolds the discrepancies between female and male growing experiences, but Tenar couldn't have changed her fate without Ged's help or, according to Lefanu's comment, rescue.



To be extreme, the first trilogy is not really a story of all Earthsea people but the heroic tales of Ged's. In an essay entitled “The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,” Le Guin talks about her understanding of hero tales:

The story...has a Hero. Heroes are powerful. Before you know it, the men and women in the wild-oat patch and their kids and the skills of the makers and the thoughts of the thoughtful and the songs of the singers are

all part of it, have all been pressed into service in the tale of the Hero.

But it isn't their story. It is his. (*Edge* 166)

Although the first trilogy does include Tenar's and Arren's coming-of-age stories, the main focus falls on Ged's heroic tales to a great extent, such as how Ged fights against his own shadow and becomes a great mage in *Wizard*, how Ged rescues Tenar and restores the Ring of Erreth-Akbe in *Tombs*, and how Ged defeats the evil wizard and helps Arren succeed to the throne in *Shore*. In short, the first trilogy is less Tenar's or Arren's story than Ged's hero tales. That is to say, Ged's perspectives, which stand for the patriarchal points of view, usually take control of the main narratives in the first trilogy. And this is just the biggest problem of hero tales—the hero speaks the “father tongue”:



White man speak with forked tongue; White man speak dichotomy. His language expresses the values of the split world, valuing the positive and devaluing the negative in each redivision: subject/object, self/other, mind/body, dominant/submissive, active/passive, Man/Nature, man/woman, and so on. The father tongue is spoken from above. It goes one way. No answer is expected, or heard. (*Edge* 149)

The first trilogy is exactly told in the forked tongue that is composed of dualistic divisions. To be precise, *Wizard* is basically about the symbolic struggle between

light and shadow, that is, the battle between one's positive and negative qualities.

When the shadow was first released, Ged regarded it as an evil enemy. Then he realized the shadow was also part of himself, so he recognized and integrated it.

After the integration, Ged grew up stronger and became the Archmage, the most influential figure in Earthsea. It appears that the dualistic light/shadow division does not exist since the integration. However, it is not a win-win situation because it is light that outwits shadow and takes control over everything. As for the shadow, it is no longer the enemy—it is simply gone. Similarly in *Tombs*, Ged and Tenar

respectively represent the masculine and the feminine principles. That they worked together to recover the Ring of Erreth-Akbe, I'd argue, symbolizes the harmonic union of the two seemingly incompatible principles. Yet, Ged gradually took the leading role in the middle of the task while Tenar just followed his instructions.

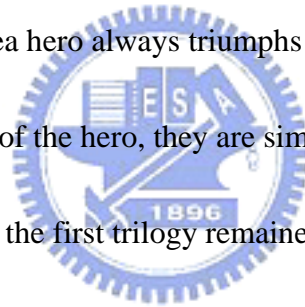
After the mission was achieved, Tenar, like the shadow, simply disappeared in the third book. In addition, the dualistic divisions also exist in *Shore*, which copes with the complicated life/death issue. The disturbing element that caused Earthsea's imbalance came from Cob's resistance to death and desire for immortal life. Ged was aware that death was a necessary process in the laws of nature, so he defeated Cob by making the black wizard accept his own death. Although Ged also experienced a symbolic death—he lost his wizardly power—he survived in the Death

Land and made it back to the living world. Once again, the unbeatable hero won.

To sum up, the first trilogy focuses on Ged's heroic tales, which deeply depends upon the dualistic divisions. As Le Guin points out in "Is Gender Necessary?," the central problem of the patriarchal society is "the problem of exploitation—exploitation of the woman, of the weak, of the earth;" to be specific, the male-dominated society depends on dualistic divisions of "superior/inferior, ruler/ruled, owner/owned, user/used"

(*Language* 172). In other words, the first trilogy is highly patriarchal since it also counts on dualistic divisions. What's more, just like the dominated men in the

patriarchal society, the Earthsea hero always triumphs and accomplishes his mission in the end; as for the opposite of the hero, they are simply made invisible as the Other.



So the magical world in the first trilogy remained patriarchal for years, until almost two decades later, Le Guin decided to write *Tehanu*, which is very different from her previous three Earthsea novels in many ways. Each book of the first trilogy has an adolescent protagonist and focuses on his or her coming-of-age adventure.

Unlike the first trilogy, *Tehanu* has Goha, who is none other than the middle-aged Tenar, as its leading protagonist, instead. Even if Tenar used to be the high priestess, she is now a common peasant woman in her middle age. Ever since she successfully escaped from the tombs, she has lived as an ordinary life as most women do in both the realistic and fictional worlds—getting married, raising children, and then being all

alone again after her husband died, her daughter married, and her son went away.

The seemingly tranquil and monotonous life has a sudden twist when a seriously burned child, Therru, comes into Tenar's shelter. Then Ged, after getting fatally injured in the Death Land, is carried on the dragon's back to Tenar. Tenar and Ged are reunited again after a quarter of a century. This time, she is no longer the high priestess, and neither is he the powerful Archmage any more. Thus, *Tehanu* relates a story about a middle-aged widow—Tenar, her handicapped adopted daughter—Therru, and her old wizard friend who has lost all his magic power—Ged.

As a fantasy novel, *Tehanu* doesn't seem to be very attractive due to its lack of any valiant heroic protagonist or adventurous voyage. In addition to the ordinary, even handicapped, protagonists, the theme of *Tehanu* circles around non-wizardry daily triviality to a very large extent, which is also quite rare in the genre. It might seem curious to many that Le Guin would like to resume the Earthsea series and take up Tenar's mid-life story. So Le Guin made it clear why she has chosen such a different story to continue the Earthsea Cycle:

I couldn't continue my hero-tale until I had, as woman and artist, wrestled with the angles of the feminist consciousness....From 1972 on I knew there should be a fourth book of Earthsea, but it was sixteen years before I could write it....*Tehanu* takes up where the trilogy left off, in the

same hierarchic, male-dominated society; but now, instead of using the pseudo-genderless male viewpoint of the heroic tradition, the world is seen through a woman's eyes. This time the gendering of the point of view is neither hidden nor denied....I had "revised" Earthsea.

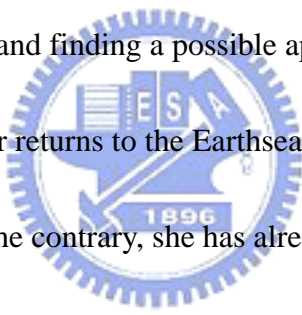
(Earthsea Revised 11-12)

Realizing that Ged's pseudo-genderless viewpoint is not universal but highly patriarchal, Le Guin decides to "lose the hero myths" and proceeds with the story through a feminine perspective "so that...[she] can find what is worth admiration"

(Edge 174). To be specific, the first trilogy has certain leftover problems, with regard to gender issues in particular, so that Le Guin needs to work on those unsolved problems by means of a new trilogy. But what exactly are the remnants of the first trilogy?

On the one hand, in spite of her effort to engage in the feminine coming-of-age experience, Le Guin neglected or somehow could not give Tenar a definite position. Le Guin ended *Tombs* by sending Tenar to Ogion, Ged's tutor, rather than to Havnor, the capital island of Earthsea. In the end of *Tombs*, Ged tells Tenar, "I'll take you away from the princes and the rich lords; for it's true that you have no place there [in Havnor]. You are too young, and too wise" (178-79). According to Elizabeth Cummins, Tenar cannot "immediately go back [to the Earthsea Cycle] and become a

peasant wife and mother, nor does she have the credentials to be a princess; she cannot become a wizard or a king”; in other words, “Le Guin has created a strong woman and then was unable to imagine an appropriate place for her in the hierarchical, male world” (156). As a result, Tenar, despite being the most significant female role in the first trilogy, simply disappears in *Shore*. By contrast, Ged can keep on his journey as the Archmage and give assistance to the king-to-be Arren. It takes time, for both Tenar and Le Guin, to grow and to find a proper place for the “self-defined woman,” as Cummins terms it (157). Therefore, *Tehanu* serves the purpose of continuing Tenar’s life course and finding a possible appropriate place for her.



Surprisingly, when Tenar returns to the Earthsea Cycle, she does not become as heroic as Ged or Arren. On the contrary, she has already left her guardian, Ogion, and gotten married with an ordinary farmer, which falls short of Ged’s expectations of her. That Tenar quits learning wizardry with Ogion represents her disinterest in the patriarchal knowledge; she knows perfectly what she really wants—she wants to get married and to have children like most women do. To those who expect another hero tale, “Tenar’s choice will appear foolish, and her story sadly unheroic” (*Revised* 13); however, this is exactly what makes her different from the male protagonists in the first trilogy. As Le Guin narrates in *Earthsea Revised*:

...[Tenar’s] definition of action, decision, and power is not heroic in the

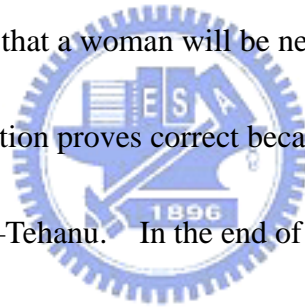
masculine sense. Her acts and choice do not involve ascendance, domination, power over others, and seem not to involve great consequences. They are “private” acts and choices, made in terms of immediate, actual relationships. (13)

Although Tenar does not go through any heroic adventure or accomplish any praiseworthy achievement in *Tehanu*, she is occupied with various daily chores—managing the ranch, taking care of her foster daughter and teaching Ged how to be an ordinary man, etc. All the things that keep her busy will not appear in hero tales, in which “the public and the private can be separated” into two worlds—“one important, the other not” (*Revisioned* 13). Le Guin does not shape Tenar into a hero that meets the masculine standards, which often involves the devaluation of women. Instead, Le Guin allows the heroine to choose her own path and grow at her own will as a wife, a mother and, most importantly, a woman. Therefore, I would argue, by delving into Tenar’s mid-life, Le Guin means to place an emphasis on the private sphere and the feminine principles, both of which have been neglected or even excluded in the hero tales of the first trilogy. Namely, Le Guin intends to arouse the readers’ attention to the invisible Other in *Tehanu*.

On the other hand, Lebannen alone cannot restore the equilibrium to Earthsea.

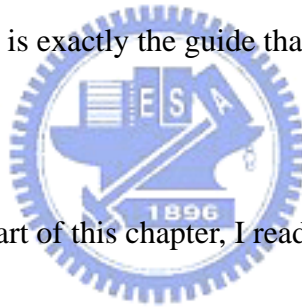
While Lebannen becomes the king of all Earthsea, Ged is too seriously hurt to

maintain his wizardly power. That is to say, Earthsea has its king but loses its Archmage in the meantime. It is, however, assumed in the first trilogy that Earthsea can reach the equilibrium only through the cooperation between the King and the Archmage. As a result, Lebannen and the Roke Masters, following the clue—“A Woman on Gont”¹¹—have tried their best in search of Ged or a new archmage in *Tehanu*. Yet, they can neither get in contact with Ged nor find a new archmage because they misinterpret the clue, thinking that the Woman on Gont is their guide to the new archmage. Counter to the Roke Masters, Tenar claims that Master Patterner’s prophecy signifies that a woman will be needed to help Earthsea find its new balance. Tenar’s contention proves correct because “the Woman on Gont” turns out to be her foster daughter—Tehanu. In the end of the fourth book, Tenar and Ged are confronted and imprisoned by a black wizard named Aspen, a supporter of Cob. Without wizardry, they are totally helpless. At last, it is Tehanu that calls for the eldest dragon, Kalessin, and successfully rescues her foster parents. According to Le Guin in *Earthsea Revisioned*, Aspen stands for “the defenders of the old tradition”



¹¹ After Roke lost its Archmage—Ged, the Roke Council members got together to select a new one from the Masters. However, the Masters “were all difference...and could come to no agreement” (*Tehanu* 175). In the end, a few prophetic words—“A woman on Gont” (*Tehanu* 176)—came from Master Patterner’s mouth and ceased the dispute. The Masters believe, as Master Windkey said, “Evidently this woman is to guide us, show us the way, somehow, to our archmage” (*Tehanu* 177). But Tenar harbors great suspicion toward their assumption and points out that an archmage could be no longer needed because Earthsea has its king. Moreover, she also thinks “the Woman on Gont” was not a guide to a new archmage but a key figure who could help restore a true balance to Earthsea. (*Tehanu* 174-81)

(19).¹² Since neither Ged nor Tenar knows how to use wizardry any more, they cannot “stand against the pure malevolence of institutionalized power” (19). “Their strength and salvation,” as a result, “must come from outside the institutions and traditions”; to be precise, “[i]t must be a new thing” (19). In other words, through this confrontation, Le Guin has conveyed a strong message that Earthsea should move forward and have changes, instead of sticking to its old tradition, which is highly patriarchal and hierarchical. Besides, the forces that motivate Earthsea’s transformation must come from outside the wizardly hierarchy—namely, from the excluded Other. And Tehanu is exactly the guide that leads Earthsea to the Other and to a new order.



To sum up, in the first part of this chapter, I read the first trilogy as a problematic hero’s tale. It is the problematic nature of heroism that propels Le Guin to “re-discover” the fictional world in the second trilogy. It proves that the first trilogy mainly focuses on Ged’s hero tales and the magical world represented in the first three books is highly patriarchal. For this reason, Le Guin returns to Earthsea and resumes Tenar’s mid-life story in *Tehanu*, attempting to place an emphasis on the long-neglected feminine perspectives. In addition, other viewpoints of the minority

¹² When Aspen captures Ged and Tenar, he makes himself clear that he despises Ged and Tenar for he has no wizardly power any more and she is a woman—the inferior being in the hierarchy. Moreover, he also shows his resentment and distrust toward the king and the Roke Masters, who are searching for a woman to help them. (*Tehanu* 268-71) That is to say, Aspen does not believe in the rule of the king and tries to maintain the wizardly hierarchy, in which women play no role at all. Therefore, it is obvious that Aspen is a loyal defender of the old hierarchical order.

groups are manifested in *Tehanu* as well. For one thing, the powerless Ged represents all the symbolically castrated men—those who used to ride on the crest of power but suddenly descend to nothing. For another, the burned child, Therru, is the spokesperson for the disabled, the abused and the young. Seeing through Tenar’s eyes, the readers gradually realize that Earthsea is in fact a world filled with discrimination and devaluation of the Other and the assumptions in the first trilogy are too naïve to lead Earthsea to a true equilibrium among all beings. In order to put an end to wizards’ monopoly of power and overthrow the hierarchical structure, Le Guin re-introduces dragons, including Tehanu and Kalissin, in the fourth book. The dragons symbolize the excluded Other—all the minorities that are repressed and made invisible in Earthsea. Le Guin believes that only through the forces coming from the Other can Earthsea get out of the hierarchical order and get its salvation. When Tenar and Ged are rescued by dragons in the end of *Tehanu*, Le Guin’s revision of her fictional world has just begun. This is why Tehanu decides to stay with her foster parents in Earthsea rather than leave with Kalessin on the other wind (*Tehanu* 277-78). As Kalessin says to Tehanu, “Thou hast work to do here,” Le Guin’s mission is not completed yet, either. Therefore, in the following two chapters, the thesis will center on how Le Guin, along with her dragons, revises the power structure of Earthsea in the latest two Earthsea novels, *Tales from Earthsea* and *The Other Wind*.

Chapter 2

Dismantling Wizardly Authority in *Tales from Earthsea*

The school on Roke is where boys who show promise in sorcery are sent from all the Inner Lands of Earthsea to learn the highest arts of magic.

There they become proficient in the various kinds of sorcery, learning names, and runes, and skills, and spells, and what should and what should not be done, and why. And there, after long practice, and if hand and

mind and spirit all keep pace together, they may be named wizard, and

receive the staff of power. True wizards are made only on Roke.



The Farthest Shore

The above description of the wizardly school on Roke is an excerpt from *The Farthest Shore*, the third book in the Earthsea series. Implicit in the seemingly natural description of Roke are some unanswered questions: Why are only boys allowed to enter the wizardly school? What are the “highest” arts of magic and how are they defined? Moreover, must all the talented be trained and then become “true” wizards on Roke without any other alternatives? These questions indicate the hidden problematics in the construction of the wizardly school, which exemplifies the power structure in Earthsea. To be specific, as I have pointed out in the first chapter, the

magical world represented in the first trilogy is highly patriarchal and hierarchical.

However, before the second trilogy came out, the assumptions posed in the first three

books were mostly taken for granted. *Tehanu* is a crucial transition for it displays the

author's feminist reflection on and rethinking of the world-building. Then in *Tales*

from Earthsea,¹³ Le Guin presents us with stories of Earthsea's past and furthers our

understanding about the establishment of the wizardly hierarchy, which mainly

depends on the man-made institutionalization of the wizardly authority—Roke School.

That is to say, the significance of *Tales* lies in that it provides subversive facts that

contradict the previous assumptions and proves the seemingly inherent wizardly

hierarchy to be artificial. In this sense, *Tales* functions to overthrow the hierarchical

order in Earthsea. In this chapter, therefore, I aim to unfold how Le Guin, with her

evolving feminist awareness, dismantles the hierarchical wizardly world in *Tales* in

order to find possible answers to the forgoing questions.

“The Finder,” the first short story from *Tales from Earthsea*, is about how the

¹³ *Tales from Earthsea* (2001) contains five tales that stretch over hundreds of years in Earthsea. The five tales are respectively “The Finder,” “Darkrose and Diamond,” “The Bones of the Earth,” “On the High Marsh,” and “Dragonfly.” In the Forward of this fifth Earthsea book, Le Guin made each of the five stories a brief introduction: “The Finder” takes place about three hundred years before the time of the novels [the Earthsea Cycle], in a dark and troubled time; its story casts light on how some of the customs and institutions of the Archipelago came to be. “The Bones of the Earth” is about the wizards who taught the wizard who first taught Ged, and shows that it takes more than one mage to stop an earthquake. “Darkrose and Diamond” might take place at any time during the last couple hundred years in Earthsea; after all, a love story can happen at any time, anywhere. “On the High Marsh” is a story from the brief but eventful six years that Ged was Archmage of Earthsea. And the last story, “Dragonfly,” which takes place a few years after the end of *Tehanu*, is the bridge between that book and the next one, *The Other Wind* (to be published soon). A dragon bridge. (xiv-xv) In addition, this collection of short stories comprises “A Description of Earthsea,” whose “function is like that of the first big map” that helps Le Guin work on the Earthsea Cycle “without getting things all out of order, and to keep contradictions and discrepancies at a minimum” (xv).

wizardly school on Roke was established. The predecessor of the school was an organization called the Hand or the Women of the Hand, in which women were indeed the majority and yet some of the members were men. However, “it serves to call ourselves women,” said a member, “for the great folk don’t look for women to work together” (43). In that dark time, sorcery was regarded as an evil power since quite a few wizards, sorcerers and witches misused and corrupted the power for personal benefits. As a result, it was perilous to form a wizardly alliance for it might cause serious hostility and destruction to itself. Ironically, the misleading name of the wizardly organization appeared to be a perfect protective umbrella by way of the prejudice that women were powerless and harmless because they could hardly form so solid a bond that could be “threatening.”



The arts of magic were thus able to be kept and passed down from generation to generation in virtue of the “Women” of the Hand while the wizardly school was gradually evolving at the same time. By laying emphasis on “Women,” I try to highlight a fact that “[a]ll the teachers of the art magic on Roke were women” (55). In other words, women were not less gifted in the arts of magic than men; besides, as the guardians of magic in the dark time they played the most significant role in the establishment of the wizardly school from the outset. However, why does the foregoing citation from *The Farthest Shore* only refer to its male apprentices when it

comes to the wizardly school on Roke? To be more precise, where have all the women gone?

Shortly after the wizardly school was established, disputes over the Rule of Roke coming up between the male and female members started. Some wizards demanded “to separate men from women” on account of the belief that “a true wizard must be a man” who is absolutely “celibate;” furthermore, they even wanted “men to make the decision for all” (75-76). According to Mike Cadden, “The Finder” is not just a story that “explains how the school was formed as a place for both men and women” but also one that “shows the seeds of prejudice;” these seeds of prejudice, unfortunately, have sprouted and grown into “a culture of misogyny that keeps women out of the school and away from the discipline, reducing them to ill-trained witches...” (82). But why did the wizards wish to expel women from the school; that is, what was the *arriere-pensee* that resulted in women’s being exiled?

Based on “A Description of Earthsea,” there was no king in the dark ages of Earthsea and the vacancy of the throne lasted for hundreds of years. The absence of a king brought about a long period of anarchy in the Archipelago primarily for lack of an influential government. Then a wizardly school on Roke was founded in the middle of chaos “as a center where they [all the gifted people, whether men or women,] might gather and share knowledge, clarify the disciplines, and exert ethical

control over the practices of wizardry” (271). With the passage of time, Roke’s influence grew steadily in every aspect of people’s life in the Archipelago. In addition to its contribution to molding wizardry into a coherent system of knowledge, the school had an ever-growing political impact upon all the Inner Islands. Trained wizards from Roke were sent to other islands on quest to protect islanders against threats, such as pirates and warlords, and eventually to help restore the social order; hence, “[w]hile the throne in Havnor [the capital] remained empty...Roke School served effectively as the central government of the Archipelago” (271).

The yoking of magical power and political power makes it plain to see why women were driven away from Roke School. This is a conspiracy—a conspiracy that worked so perfectly well as to empower men with the exclusive access to wizardry, with which wizards could occupy the most privileged position among all. A citation from “Darkrose and Diamond” in the following could best illustrate how paramount the wizardly power was as well as how exalted the wizards, through taking advantage of the power, were:

In Golden’s understanding, money was power, but not the only power.

There were two others, one equal, one greater. There was birth....Power of birth and power of money were contingent, and must be earned lest they be lost. But beyond the rich and the lordly were those called the

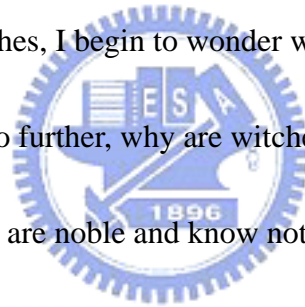
men of power: the wizards. Their power, though little exercised, was *absolute*. In their hands lay the fate of the long-kingless kingdom of the Archipelago. (103-04 emphasis added)

Therefore, Golden had tried to induce and encourage his talented son, Diamond, to get on the way to becoming a wizard so that the son could use his absolute power to keep things under control. Even though Golden hoped Diamond to get exposed to wizardry in the boy's youth, he never liked to see his son playing with Darkrose—a witch's daughter—because she was certainly “no fit companion for Diamond” (103).

But what on earth made Darkrose an inadequate playmate for Diamond? For one thing, Darkrose's mother was a witch and she naturally inherited some talent and spells from her mother. As an old saying goes, “Weak as women's magic, wicked as women's magic” (120), Darkrose was trapped in her birth along with her magic, both of which were thought to be inferior and even vicious. For another, being a woman was against all odds and it would make Darkrose a stumbling stone on Diamond's way to a wizard who must be celibate throughout his life in order to keep his magic pure. Thus, they could never have been together if Diamond hadn't given up his or, to be accurate, his father's pursuit of power.

However, why is it that “a wizard can't have anything to do with women,” especially not with witches, in Diamond's word (119)? Briefly speaking, for what

must all wizards lead a life of absolute chastity? This question could be resolved according to a common belief that celibacy can sustain the purity of wizards' magic. Yet this seemingly logical explanation in fact gives rise to a few more profound questions: What is the definition of pure magic? Why is it so crucial for wizards to keep the purity of their magic? Moreover, how does a sexual relationship do harm to wizardry? What about other kinds of relationships? Do they also damage the magic power? On the other hand, it is generally perceived that witches are wicked not just because they cause harm but they *are* harm itself. Yet, in the wake of such a strong accusation against witches, I begin to wonder where the negative impressions on witches come from. To go further, why are witches called evil and their magic "low arts" while most wizards are noble and know nothing about witchery but the "High Art" of magic?



As is mentioned previously, Mike Cadden attributes the degradation of women, witches in particular, to misogyny, which indeed appears to be a possible explanation. Nevertheless, he ignores the complicated connotations that the term itself encompasses. In other words, misogyny alone cannot serve well enough to unravel the whole mystery of women's involuntary relegation to an inferior status in Earthsea, let alone in the real world. It is definitely necessary to probe into the core of the misogynic mindset; only in so doing can the composition and operation of misogyny

be demystified. In light of Le Guin’s insight, “[t]he misogyny that shapes every aspect of our civilization is the *institutionalized* form of male fear and hatred of what they have denied and therefore cannot know, cannot share...” (“Woman/Wilderness” 163 emphasis added). To be plain, it is male fear and hatred that constitute the foundation of misogyny while the fear and hatred come into being out of irrational rejection towards any knowledge concerning women. A description about the main protagonist, Irioth, from “On the High Marsh” can strengthen the foregoing argument:

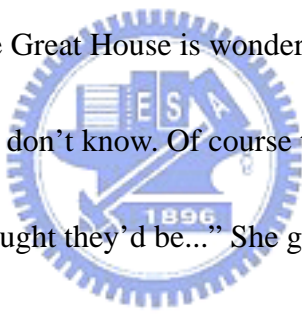
He knew nothing at all about women. He had not lived there where women were since he was ten years old. He had been afraid of them [women]....But since he had been traveling about in Earthsea, he had met women and found them easy to be with, like the animals; they went about their business not pay much attention to him unless he frightened them. He tried not to do that. He had no wish or reason to frighten them. They were not men. (159)

Irioth was sent to Roke School in early youth, which hindered him from doing justice to women, since all the wizards on Roke whether masters or apprentices live in the Great House, where no women are allowed to enter according to the Rule of Roke. The wizards don’t have dealings with the islanders very often because they normally supply the food for themselves. As a result, the Roke wizards can hardly get to

know women, even though there are quite a few female inhabitants on the island, and they turn the other sex into a mystery that can arouse their deepest fear. After leaving Roke Island, Irioth had more chances to get along with women and to his surprise he related very well to them whom he used to consider mysterious and terrifying. Irioth realized in the end that women produced no threat to him; only men, especially wizards, did. He had spent too much time learning the art of magic in the isolated wizardly school as “a rivalrous spirit in him that made him look on any power he did not have, any thing that he did not know, as a threat, a challenge, a thing to fight against...” (178). Ignorance brings about misunderstanding, then fear and hatred. This is exactly what Irioth had experienced—his meager knowledge about women resulted in the misconception that all women were somehow vicious, from which the male fear and hatred of women sprang. Therefore, when he told Emer, the middle-age widow who had given him a shelter, “You re a kind woman,” “the words were so new to him,” because they were “words he had never said or thought before” to any women at all (160).

On the other hand, Irioth’s story reveals an unusual phenomenon among the wizards in Roke School. Irioth could be one of the most talented wizards among all but his “spirit of rivalry” grew so strong as to change the art of learning into “a contest, a game;” accordingly, he misused his power for the sake of obtaining more power but

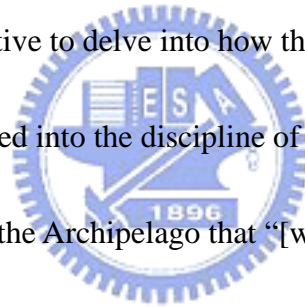
ended up with corruption (179). Therefore, it might not be good for Irioth to stay in the isolated school, “always among wizards and mages...all of [whom] craving power and more power, striving to be the strongest” (179). Although few wizards could match up to Irioth concerning the magic talent, he could not be considered as an exceptional case. In “Dragonfly”—the last story of *Tales from Earthsea*—Dragonfly, who would be Irian later on, expressed her disappointment at the wizards in Roke School after she had learned more facts about the school from an exiled young wizardry apprentice, Ivory:



“To hear about the Great House is wonderful, but I thought the people there would be—I don’t know. Of course they’re mostly boys when they go there. But I thought they’d be...” She gazed off at the sheep on the hill, her face troubled. “Some of them are really bad and stupid,” she said in a low voice. “They get into the school because they’re rich. And they study there just to get richer. Or to get power.” (197)

At this point, Roke School has gone astray from its original objective—to do magic for no gain but public welfare, that is, the equilibrium of the world—if Dragonfly’s observation is not far-fetched. In fact she is very perceptive and accurate or Golden in “Darkrose and Diamond” wouldn’t have wanted his son, Diamond, to be a wizard, strongly believing that wizards owned the absolute power to which none of the other

powers could ever compare. The ugly competition among the wizards displays their excessive and endless greed for greater power, whether magical or political. With the pursuit of power, wizards were becoming so arrogant and self-righteous that they came up with the idea of monopoly. But the monopolization of magic cannot be achieved easily; it takes plenty of time and, more importantly, human effort. By human effort, I mean wizards must have endeavored to weave a web of pseudo-beliefs that made common people convinced of wizards' predominance. In Le Guin's term, the web is "the institutionalized form of male fear and hatred;" therefore, in order to unweave the web, it is imperative to delve into how those pseudo-beliefs were constructed and institutionalized into the discipline of magic.



It is widely accepted in the Archipelago that "[w]omen's powers were particularly distrusted and maligned, the more so as they were conflated with the Old Powers" (*Tales* 272). In *Tombs of Atuan*, the readers are told that the Old Powers are only worshiped in the Kargad Lands, where a temple was built for and a high priestess, Arha, was to serve the Nameless Ones, that is, the Old Powers of the Earth. Even if there are other places that belong to the Old Powers in the Inner Lands, they don't have "such worship as they receive here [in the Kargad Lands]" (96). Unlike the Kargish, the Hardic people generally despise the Old Powers, regarding them as the source of all possible evils. Here is a description about the Old Powers made by Ged,

which presents the Hardic attitude toward them:

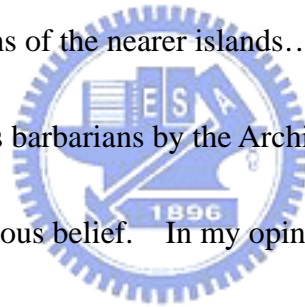
They [The Old Powers] have no power of making. All their power is to
darken and destroy. They cannot leave this place; they *are* this
place....They should not be denied nor forgotten, but neither should they
be worshiped....And where men worship these things and abase
themselves before them, there evil breeds.... (129-30)

This passage clearly shows the Hardic understanding of the Old Powers as the root of
evil; as a result, for the world's good the Old Powers need being confined to the
Tombs permanently, like the life sentenced prisoners. It is, by the same logic,
unwise to worship the Old Powers for it will vitalize them and then spark off the
breeding of evil. Therefore, after Arha, the young Tenar, successfully escaped from
the Tombs, she blamed herself for the death of her loyal old servant, Manan; however,
Ged comforted her by saying that she was just "the vessel of evil" (178). In other
words, Tenar was not necessarily responsible for Manan's death,¹⁴ but she did make a
big mistake—to worship and serve the Nameless, which would definitely lead to
misfortune.

The foregoing analysis, according to the Hardic perspective on the Old Powers,

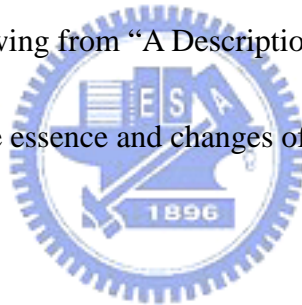
¹⁴ Manan, a eunuch servant, thought Ged had put a spell on Tenar and made she lose her judgment and keep him alive in the Undertomb. In order to get rid of Ged, Manan secretly followed Tenar in the underground labyrinth of the Tombs, trying to protect her and put an end to Ged. However, Manan fell into a deep giant pit in the labyrinth when he tried to push Ged into the pit, and never got out. (*Tombs*, 123, 143-44)

might be doubtful if the narrative shifts and takes the Kargish viewpoint. The Kargs, counter to the Hardic, believe in the Old Powers while despise any forms of magic and thus suppress the use of it because they consider magic as evil. This is exactly why Tenar called Ged “an infidel, an unbeliever” in their first long conversation for she had been taught that all the Archipelagans, the wizards in particular, were the traitors to the Old Powers (96). However, the Kargs don’t attain too many blessings out of their devotion to the Nameless; on the contrary, the “refusal to practice magic puts the Kargs at a disadvantage with the Archipelagans [the Hardic],” and leads them to “piratical raids and invasions of the nearer islands...” (*Tales* 251). For this reason, the Kargs are often belittled as barbarians by the Archipelagans due to their plundering behavior and religious belief. In my opinion, the contempt for the Kargs implies a power struggle in which the Archipelagans apparently prevail. For one thing, the Kargad Lands lie in the utmost north-east of Earthsea while Havnor, the capital island of the Hardic Lands, is located in the center of Earthsea. The geographical location contributes not only to the prosperity of the Hardic Lands, where constant trade flows, but also to the poverty and marginalization of the Kargad Lands. For another, the worship of the Old Powers as well as the rejection of wizardry pushes the Kargs even more away from the center. Hence, the Hardic gain dominance over most territory of Earthsea and, more significantly, the power of



discourse. In other words, it is the Hardic viewpoint, instead of the Kargish one, that is widely perceived as the truth. It is, however, too arbitrary to identify with the Hardic perspective, which is actually filled with prejudice and discrimination, as the universal truth. On the contrary, both the Hardic and the Kargish perspectives are competing for the dominant discourse. Just as Ged had tried his best to fight against the Nameless Ones in the underground labyrinth, the competition between the Hardic and the Kargish perspectives could be deemed as a battle between wizardry and the Old Powers.

A depiction in the following from “A Description of Earthsea” provides a more detached perspective about the essence and changes of the Old Powers during the battle with wizardry:



Though like any power they could be perverted to evil use in the service of ambition...the Old Powers were inherently sacral and pre-ethical.

During and after the Dark Time, however, they were feminised and demonised in the Hardic lands by wizards, as they were in the Kargad

Lands by the cults of the Priestkings and the Godkings. (*Tales* 272)

The feminization—and thereby demonization—of the Old Powers is the most manifest in the Kargad Lands. In *The Tombs of Atuan*, the readers are informed that the Nameless Ones must be served by women. Among the couple of hundred people

who lived in this place, they were mostly priestesses, a few slaves and guards. The slaves and guards had to stay in the peripheral area, outside the wall that surrounded the Tombs. Only on some special festivals could a few guards cross the wall to assist priestesses in the parade; however, they could never enter the holy temple. Besides, the guards had to make great sacrifice in order to work there—all of them were castrated eunuchs because men could disgrace the Nameless Ones and thus were forbidden to step into this sacred area (*Tombs* 15-18). As a result, the Tombs were made to be a fully feminized space. To this point, the connection between women and the Old Powers was built. Yet this connection is not inherent; on the contrary, it was constructed through a man-made presumption that only women, not men, could serve the Old Powers.



In addition to feminization, the Old Powers had also undergone the process of being demonized. Most wizards are aware of the sublimity of the Old Powers of the Earth, that is—Nature, and thus are deeply afraid of them. They know that no man, even the greatest wizard, is powerful enough to conquer Nature. I would argue that the castration of the guards in the Tombs symbolically suggests Man’s inability to fight against Nature. However, wizards refuse “to abase themselves before them [the Old Powers],” in other words, to yield to Nature (*Tombs* 130). They had chosen to abandon, deny, and even stigmatize the Old Powers through a simplistic division

between Man and Nature, as Le Guin puts it:

Nature as not including humanity, Nature as what is not human, that

Nature is a construct made by Man, not a real thing; just as most of what

Man says and knows about women is mere myth and construct.

(“Woman/Wilderness” 162)

To be specific, Nature is wild, primitive, monstrous, is vicious, and destructive while

Man is civilized, intelligent, rational, virtuous, and conscientious. In this binary

logic, Man is all that is not Nature. Nature is all that Man excludes. Nature, just

like women, is the constructed Other. But how is the artificial dualistic division

between Man and Nature constructed? How does Man exclude Nature? And how

does Nature be made into the Other? In order to clear the above doubts, I would like

to go back to the second Earthsea book, which retains quite a few substantial

depictions of Nature, that is, the Old Powers. These depictions reveal the changes of

Kargish people’s recognition toward the Old Powers and, more importantly, the power

shift from Nature to Man.

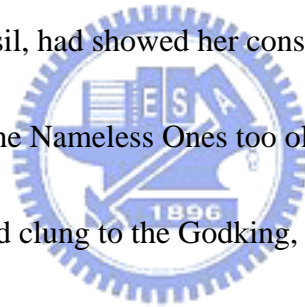
The Tombs of Atuan could be divided into two parts, in my opinion, because of the obvious discrepancies of the interpretations and recognitions about the Old Powers.

In the first half of the novel the readers acquire an interpretation of the Old Powers as

the most ancient, sacred and almighty power from Arha, the young Tenar. This

interpretation, being part of the education that Tenar had to receive in her high priestess training, is apparently not in accordance with her personal observation.

Tenar had realized that her Masters, the Nameless Ones, were no longer the religious center through a few subtle but weighty facts. Among the three temples¹⁵ in the Tombs of Atuan, the Hall of the Throne, that is the temple of the Old Powers, was in the worst maintenance whereas the splendid Temple of the Godking was always under great care. Just as Tenar said, “the Godking, and his people, are neglecting the worships of the Tombs [the Old Powers]” (*Tombs* 29). For instance, the high priestess of the Godking, Kossil, had showed her constant disbelief and contempt for the Old Powers, considering the Nameless Ones too old to have any holy power while she was absolutely loyal to and clung to the Godking, the mortal man who held the most influential power in the Kargish Empire. The shift of the religious center from the Old Powers to the Godking demonstrates a crucial transfer of the relation between Man and Nature.¹⁶ That is to say, even in the Kargish Empire, where the worship of



¹⁵ There were three temples in Atuan but each of them was dedicated to different gods, which showed the religious diversity in the Kargad Lands. The three temples were respectively Hall of the Throne, which was built for the Old Powers, the Temple of the Twin Gods and the Temple of the Godking (*Tombs* 15).

¹⁶ The history of the Kargish religion will be shortly introduced in the following, according to the record in “A Description of Earthsea.” It is said that the worship of the Old Powers was the first Kargish religious belief. Then, they started the worship of Twin Gods, two hero figures in a Kargish legend, and even developed a centralized religion—the sky-god religion, which was led by a priestly caste. The priestly caste was devoted to the institutionalization of the Kargish religious beliefs, such as building temples, setting up rituals and festivals. At the time, the priestly caste grew so powerful that their two leaders, the Priestkings, had even more dominance than the Kargish king over every aspect of people’s life. However, a few centuries later one of the Priestkings poisoned the other and then claimed himself to be the Godking. Ever since then, the worships of the Old Powers and the Twin God had remained, but the Godking had received the religious and secular power. Therefore, the worship of the Godking became the central religious belief. (*Tales* 273-75) Unlike the other two

the Nameless Ones continued, its people were no longer pious disciples of the Old Powers of the Earth—Nature, in other words. On the contrary, most Kargish people believed and submitted themselves to the Godking’s power, whether sacred or secular, as though he was not human but divine. Tenar, however, was an exception. Being the high priestess of the Nameless Ones, she naturally had confidence in her Masters and highly worshiped them. Her devout faith in the Old Powers would be destroyed only after the subsequent encounter with Ged.

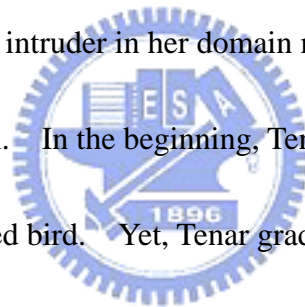
In the second half of *Tombs*, Ged preached to Tenar that the Old Powers were “dark and undying, and they hate[d] the light: the brief, bright light of our morality...,” and he wanted to convince her that the Old Powers were “not worth the worship of any human soul” (129). Ged’s negative understanding of the Old Powers could be partially attributed to a Kargish ritual that was performed out of the “respect” for the Nameless. The Kargish emperor, the Godking, would send prisoners to the Tombs as sacrifice for the Old Powers because for hundreds of years Kargish people had believed that the “gift” would certainly please the Nameless Ones. However, tracing back to the ancient time, the Kargish people used to present to the Old Powers with mostly flowers, oil, food, dances, music, etc instead of human sacrifices (*Tales* 273). I’d argue that the sacrifice of human beings that was made up by the Kargish

worships, the worship of the Godking was neither a worship of the natural power nor one of the dead legendary heroes; on the contrary, it was a worship of the king, a mortal. And I would argue the change to be a status shift between Nature and Man.

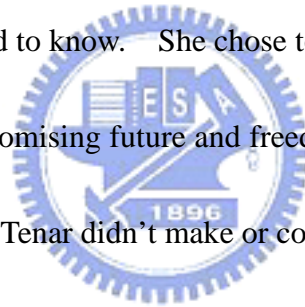
priestly caste stirred up people's fear of death and thus dramatically changed their perception of the Old Powers. As a result, the negative impressions on the Old Powers, such as the Old Powers incur only serious damage or brutal death, are in fact Man's "brilliant" work again. In short, the demonization as well as feminization of the Old Powers is internalized into people's recognition or understanding of Nature. So, Nature is a bestial monster, a great danger, a huge menace to Man—Man that dominates, Man that controls, Man that is neither vicious Nature nor wicked women. Nature has become, in light of Le Guin, what is unnatural to Man—"an utterly other," just like women's experience, knowledge, and their arts ("Woman/Wilderness" 163). In this sense, Nature, same as women, is merely a construct or myth made by the dominant Man. In short, the demonization and feminization are the most crucial constituents in Man's construction of Nature, which help the dominant Man get rid of possible threats from Nature and then occupy the privileged position.

In addition, the status shift between Ged and Tenar in *The Tombs of Atuan* is worth an investigation because the shift itself implies that Man will take over the dominance in time. According to Le Guin, *Tombs* could be called "a feminine coming of age" ("Dreams Must Explain Themselves" 50). On the one hand, *Tombs* does tell a girl's coming-of-age story and provide the readers with young Tenar's perspective, which is indeed not quite similar to the dominant viewpoint. For

instance, she regarded the Tombs as “the center of things” while wizards, such as Ged, would consider Roke to be the center (*Tombs* 29). But Tenar’s point of view could not be wholly trusted or concluded as a perspective that truly represents women’s experience and understanding of the world since the instruction she had received in her development was full of the traces of the dominant discourse or she probably wouldn’t have thought her Masters, that is the Nameless Ones, would be pleased with human sacrifices (*Tombs* 38-39). On the other hand, Tenar’s exploration in the Undertomb, which might symbolize her pursuit of womanhood, led her to Ged, a wizard. Catching sight of an intruder in her domain made her so shocked that she locked Ged up in the labyrinth. In the beginning, Tenar seemed to be in control of Ged, who looked like her caged bird. Yet, Tenar gradually identified with Ged after a few conversations with him. Before she met Ged, Tenar was mostly doing the exploration alone in the labyrinth without others’ assistance or guidance. Even if she had asked the old servant, Manan, to keep her company in the Undertomb from time to time, Tenar always led while Manan just followed. However, she appeared to be a changed person after she had decided to leave with Ged. During their escape, Tenar was so panic that she confused the pathway that used to be inscribed on her memory. Had it not been for Ged’s instructions and comfort, she couldn’t have ever got them out of the labyrinth.

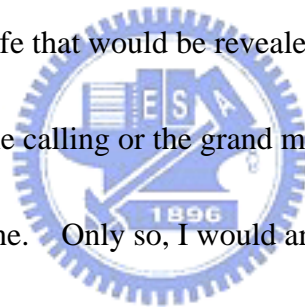


Ged's secret intrusion into the labyrinth—Tenar's domain—signifies the inevitable and imperceptible permeation of the dominant male ideology into women's awareness, which can be exemplified through the education that Tenar had received. Even though both of her instructors, Thar and Kossil, were women, Tenar couldn't have avoided being infused with part of the dominant perspective because her instructors, especially Kossil, who apparently craved for the power of domination,¹⁷ had the worship of "Man" deeply rooted in them long ago. Besides, Ged's understanding of the Old Powers and the Earthsea world had successfully made Tenar turn her back on what she used to know. She chose to give up everything and leave with Ged, being sure of the promising future and freedom that she would get hereafter. What might be ignored is that Tenar didn't make or couldn't have made the decision on her own. It is Ged that gave her the options, "You must be Arha, or you must be Tenar" for "You cannot be both" (*Tombs* 139). And she did make up her mind to be Tenar instead of Arha, not entirely out of her "free" will but through Ged's inducement. It wouldn't be so surprising, then, to see Tenar getting more and more attached to Ged during and after their escape. As a result, I wouldn't say that Tenar



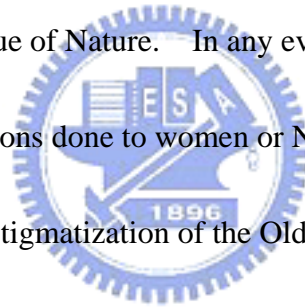
¹⁷ Kossil, as the High Priestess of the Godking, was inferior to Arha, the Priestess of the Nameless Ones according to the Kargish tradition. However, in reality, Kossil had more control over the Tombs primarily because the Godking was the one that ruled the country. To Kossil, the existence of Arha was unnecessary; therefore, she would probably remove Arha once and for all and make herself the highest priestess in the Tombs if she had any chance. Tenar was clearly aware of Kossil's ambition and believed that Kossil would not be punished for killing her since she was in complicity with the Godking, who would also be pleased with the death of the High Priestess of the Tombs. (*Tombs* 64, 119-22)

had been awakened to her true self—getting her name back in the symbolic sense—by Ged’s “enlightenment,” which seems somehow like brainwashing. Luckily, this is not a sweepstakes. In the end of the novel, Ged had to figure out where and how to settle Tenar because he couldn’t stay with her even though she wished so. In order to comfort her, Ged told Tenar that he had to follow his calling and do what he had to do; furthermore, he could not bring her along because as he said, “Where I go, I must go alone” (*Tombs* 166). Therefore, he offered her two options once again: to go to Havnor or to stay with Ged’s old master, Ogion, in Gont. Tenar chose the latter, which led her to an ordinary life that would be revealed in the fourth Earthsea book—*Tehanu*. Thanks to the calling or the grand mission that Ged needed to go on by himself, Tenar was left alone. Only so, I would argue, could she finally regain her independence and then find her own way.



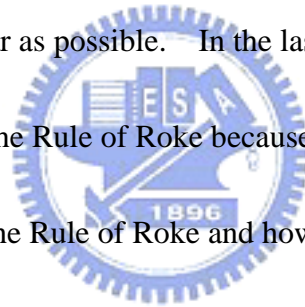
However, there is still something quite disturbing to me. If Tenar proved to be a trustworthy companion in this journey, why must Ged insist on taking his subsequent quests alone? Must all wizards do their missions on their own? Or does being a woman make Tenar disqualified? What would have happened if she had been sent to Roke School. Yet this is obviously an impossible choice that Ged could have offered. For one thing, women are not allowed to learn magic in Roke School, as mentioned. For another, granted that Tenar had the magic talent, she

would never become a great wizard like Ged. On the contrary, she would only degrade herself from the high priestess to a stigmatized witch by practicing the “low arts.” In the foregoing part of this chapter, I have tried to demystify male fear and hatred toward witches and the Old Powers in the Earthsea world, in order to answer the question: Why cannot women enter Roke School? It proves that witches and the Old Powers, or women and Nature in a broader sense, are so closely connected in the process of the man-made stigmatization. To be precise, the feminization and demonization of Nature attribute to women’s stigmatization while the stigmatization of women deteriorates the value of Nature. In any event, there is one sole motive behind all these artificial –zations done to women or Nature—to ensure the privileged status of Man. Namely, the stigmatization of the Old Powers and the witches works to maintain wizards’ superior status in Earthsea.



Roke School had played the most significant role in Earthsea while the throne of the king remained empty. In the reign of the wizardly school, Earthsea has become a world filled with veiled prejudice and injustice for the hegemonic authority of Roke School is actually founded upon a set of sophisticated dualistic distinctions, such as good/evil, light/dark, men/women, wizards/witches, wizardly power/the Old Powers, wizardry (High Art)/witchery (low arts), and so on. These distinctions are in fact not absolute. Even though there are indeed discrepancies between these

seemingly oppositions, it takes a lot of misunderstanding, intolerance and distortion, whether intentional or not, to stabilize the dualistic framework of the magical world. While Roke School claims to maintain the equilibrium of Earthsea, it is actually trying to ensure the stability of this binary social structure, in which the wizards earn the most profit. For hundreds of years, the Rule of Roke has been the norms that all Roke wizards must comply with; in other words, it is the basis of the wizardly school. Yet instead of embracing the differences, the Rule of Roke has become a means of turning all that doesn't conform to it into the Other and excluding the Other away from the wizardly school as far as possible. In the last part of this chapter, I would therefore focus on analyzing the Rule of Roke because it shows exactly how the first Archmage, Halkel, finalized the Rule of Roke and how hierarchical a world Earthsea has since been transformed into due to the Halkel's "great contributions."



According to "A Description of Earthsea" in the fifth Earthsea book—*Tales from Earthsea*, Halkel was the wizard that reversed the originally loose knowledge system of magic into a strictly defined discipline. First of all, Halkel put a specific ban against women's entering the wizardly school; he even "discouraged wizards from teaching women anything at all," especially the expertise on the True Speech (277). Halkel confined the impartation of Roke's wizardly knowledge exclusively to its wizards, which "led in the long run to a profound, long-lasting loss of knowledge

and power among the women who practiced magic” (277). That is to say, although witches still could initiate one another into their wizardly knowledge in the circle of witches and sorcerers, the witchery in circulation was limited and “called ‘base craft,’ even when it included practices otherwise called ‘high arts,’ such as healing, chanting, changing, etc” (277). Furthermore, Halkel made a distinction between witchery and sorcery. Unlike sorcery, witchery involved, as Halkel defined, mostly base crafts, a few high arts and very finite knowledge about the True Speech. However, in reality the only real difference between witchery and sorcery lied in this: Witchery was practiced by women but sorcery by men. Even so, sorcerers had an advantage that witches did not share with—a sorcery apprentice could possibly be enrolled in Roke School if he showed a talent for wizardry, which would never happen to any gifted young witch. After proper training on Roke, the apprentice would receive his own staff from his master who was definitely an authorized wizard as well and then could finally become a true wizard, based on Halkel’s definition. The succession to wizardry, however, did occur elsewhere other than on Roke, such as on Gont or Paln, only “the Masters of Roke came to regard with suspicion a student of anyone not trained on Roke” (278).

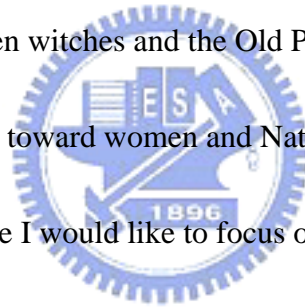
The above descriptions clearly show that Halkel’s understanding of wizardry is apparently quite biased and arbitrary. The reasons why Halkel, as well as other

wizards, was hostile to witches and made light of witchery were mostly discussed in the previous part of this chapter. The significance of these descriptions is that the man-made institutionalization of the wizardly discipline is fully displayed in a systematic way for the very first time. As a result, the readers might have an explicit notion about, for instance, what makes wizardry, sorcery and witchery different, how one can and cannot become a true wizard, and why there are no female apprentices at all in Roke School.

As Le Guin pointed out in the forward, “I became (somewhat) more systematic and methodical, and put my knowledge of the peoples and their history together into ‘A Description of Earthsea;’” these statements she made in the end piece of the fifth book, which is neither a story nor afterward, are more than a supplement to the book since they also implicitly suggest her own knowledge or, to be precise, judgments on the Earthsea world (xv). In light of Mike Cadden, “Le Guin blurs the boundaries of narration across frames and the lines that weave in and out of worlds” through this end piece (91). That is to say, Le Guin is not just a story-teller but a historian and a critic who makes researches and provides comments on the magical world.

Moreover, those personal comments, in addition to expressing her viewpoints, bridge the gap between the imaginary and the real worlds. Then, what does Le Guin attempt to say to the hierarchical wizardly society? To be accurate, how do her

descriptions on the hierarchical wizardly society reflect her understanding and even criticism of the real world? In her book of non-fictional writings—*Dancing at the Edge of the World*,¹⁸ Le Guin included several talks and essays she made in 1986. Among these pieces, “Bryn Mawr Commencement Address,” “Woman/Wilderness” and “Prospect for Women in Writing” are worth a particular investigation because they faithfully convey some of Le Guin’s feminist thoughts that are also exhibited in the second trilogy of the Earthsea Cycle. In my previous analysis, insights from “Woman/Wilderness” prove to be valuable in the process of decoding, for one thing, the mysterious relation between witches and the Old Powers in the Earthsea world and the male hatred as well as fear toward women and Nature in both the imaginary and real worlds, for another. Here I would like to focus on the other two pieces, follow the threads of her thoughts and then try to locate the connection between the two worlds.



“Prospect for Women in Writing” is a talk in which Le Guin addressed in a panel called Women in the Arts, at the Conference on Women in the Year 2000, held in 1986. In the talk she pointed out that, unlike men, women have only gained the access to literacy for around two hundred years. Even though the great power of written words did empower a few women writers, such as Jane Austen and Virginia

¹⁸ *Dancing at the Edge of the World* is Le Guin’s second collection of talks, essays, occasional pieces and reviews. It was first published in 1989, ten years after the publication of her first non-fictional writings collection, *Language of the Night* (1979).

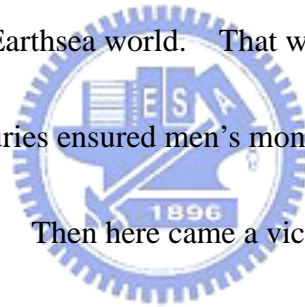
Woolf, “what is called ‘literature’ remains eighty-eighty to ninety percent male...”

(176). Furthermore, she made a statement to explain the status of women’s writing in the male-dominated literature:

Most women’s writing—like most work by women in any field—is called unimportant, secondary, by masculinist teachers and critics of both sexes; and literary styles and genres are constantly redefined to keep women’s writing in second place. (177)

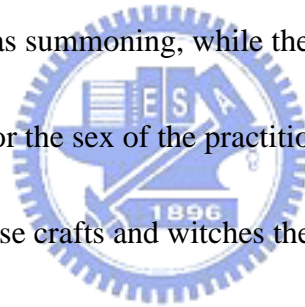
Le Guin’s comments on male dominance in literature remind me of the hierarchical

institution of wizardry in the Earthsea world. That women did not get access to literacy until very recent centuries ensured men’s monopoly of the great power of written words and knowledge. Then here came a vicious cycle: women were



generally thought to be ignorant and their ignorance was misinterpreted as the incompetence to learn or to receive further education, which most men, on the contrary, were capable of. As a result, women after being denied the entry into literacy were made inferior to men in almost every field. Roke School’s refusal to enroll female students and to teach them more about wizardly power, particularly the usage of the True Speech, which does effectively restrain women from laying hold of the dominant power over the magical world, might symbolize the rejection of women in not just literature but every aspect of life through keeping them illiterate.

However, it is next to impossible for the privileged men to everlastingly stand in the way of women's being educated; in time, women would fight for and take back their right to receive proper education. Similarly, the Roke wizards cannot wipe out the wizardly talent that some girls bear and hinder them from developing their talent even with a tightly-knit web of prevention. Therefore, in order to maintain their ascendancy Roke wizards created a hierarchical system of wizardly power, in which witchery is inferior to sorcery and sorcery is subordinate to wizardry. The difference between wizardry and sorcery lies basically in the proficiency in the True Speech and other perilous high arts, such as summoning, while there is little difference between sorcery and witchery except for the sex of the practitioners. In other words, witchery is commonly recognized as base crafts and witches the basest among all who practice magic primarily due to sexual discrimination. Though being categorized as the lowest wizardly power, witchery does include high arts as well. Unfortunately, even if some witches are familiar with high arts such as the healing power, their skills still belong to the bracket of low arts—witchery, instead of the high art—wizardry.



Women writers are somehow in a similar predicament. Most women's writing is considered trivial, insignificant and minor to men's writing because its themes are often thought to be associated with "base crafts," like housekeeping, upbringing or other women's private experience. Take Le Guin for instance, her work can only be

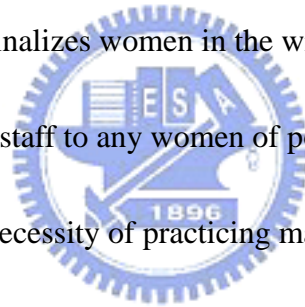
found in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* as though she, along with other women writers, is not talented enough to be put on a par with male writers. To sum up, when Le Guin shows her distrust to the wizardly hierarchy in the Earthsea world, she harbors the same suspicion toward the gender hierarchy of literature as well as that of the world in a broader sense.

In the other speech that she made also in 1986—“Bryn Mawr Commencement Address,” Le Guin furthers her criticism on the male-dominated literary hierarchy:

Literature takes shape and life in the body, in the womb of the mother tongue: always: and the Fathers of Culture get anxious about paternity. They start talking about legitimacy. They steal the baby. They ensure by every means that the artist, the writer, is male. This involves intellectual abortion by centuries of women artists, infanticide of works by women writers, and a whole medical corps of sterilizing critics working to purify the Canon, to reduce the subject matter and style of literature to something Ernest Hemingway could have understood. (153)

There are two crucial points in this passage that can be related to the wizardly hierarchy. First of all, it is legitimacy that plays an important role in the construction of the wizardly hierarchy. According to Halkel’s definition, a true wizard must first be trained by another legitimate wizard recognized by the wizardly society. After a

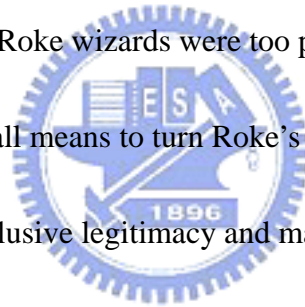
few years of training, the wizardly apprentice will receive his staff from his master, especially from the Roke Archmage or Masters if he is trained on Roke. But it doesn't mean that wizards can only practice wizardry with their staffs; on the contrary, their power lies in themselves, not in the staffs. Then why must a wizard carry his own staff? In my opinion, the staff is a hierarchical symbol that distinguishes wizards from sorcerers and witches; hence, it serves the function like that of a diploma—the evidence that proves the wizard's excellence and, more importantly, legitimacy in wizardry. Moreover, the staff is also a phallic symbol that ensures wizards' superiority and marginalizes women in the wizardly hierarchy. Ironically, that no wizards would grant a staff to any women of power indirectly strengthens my argument that a staff is not a necessity of practicing magic but simply a man-made construct since no witches ever need to do magic with the help of a staff. In other words, a wizardly staff is not just a diploma issued by the patriarchal authority but also a symbolic emblem that serves to exclude women and consolidate wizards' social status in Earthsea.



In addition, it is said that wizardly apprentices could be trained on Gont or Paln instead of Roke. However, the Roke Masters gradually have doubts about the Gont or Paln wizards and consider their magic to be unorthodox and somewhat evil. Take “The Bones of the Earth” for instance. Being the shortest piece in *Tales*, it tells a

simple story about how Ogion and his master, Heleth, cooperated to appease a big earthquake. The readers are informed of the fact that Heleth didn't attempt to suppress the quake with any knowledge or wizardly skills that he had learned on Roke; on the contrary, he tried very hard to memorize a Gontish spell that his first teacher, Ard, taught him. At first, readers could only get a very vague picture of Ard from Ogion's wild presumption and suppose that Ard was "a sorcerer of no fame...and perhaps of ill fame" because Heleth had never told Ogion anything about Ard—a name that "some mystery or shame darkened..." (147). In the end, Heleth revealed the true identity of the mysterious Ard to Ogion. To Ogion's great surprise, Ard was neither a wizard nor a sorcerer. The reason why Ard remained a secret was not that Ard was too notorious to be mentioned but that Ard was a witch. But it doesn't mean that Heleth felt great shame at having a witch teacher; instead, he wondered "what difference it made to her wizardry, her being a woman" (149). Heleth's long-lasting silence about Ard or the Gontish spells resulted from his fear and confusion in the wake of the mundane judgment. No wizards on Roke had ever talked about the strange Gontish matters that he heard from his witch teacher, so he was afraid he would be despised by the Roke wizards for taking such things too seriously. He became so confused that he could not even be sure whether "they [the Gontish matters] were true wizardry or mere witchery, as they said on Roke" until he

needed them to suppress the upcoming earthquake (148). At length, Heleth, by taking advantage of the “dirty magic” he learned from Ard, successfully stopped a disaster with Ogion’s assistance; only he also paid a heavy price for it—his life. But none of the islanders knew what Heleth had done and thought that Ogion quieted the quake all by himself. Even though Ogion kept reminding them of the truth, “My teacher [Heleth] was with me, and his teacher [Ard] with him,” the islanders simply wouldn’t listen to his words and “praised his modesty” (151). The whole event signifies, as Heleth said, “There are different kinds of knowledge, after all,” besides the Roke one (148). Yet the Roke wizards were too proud and arbitrary to tolerate other voices, so they tried by all means to turn Roke’s magic into the only orthodox knowledge, fought for the exclusive legitimacy and made Roke School the sole legal authority. Therefore, the islanders’ inability to listen to the truth that some “base” Gontish spell from a witch saved them all, to a certain extent, stands for the arbitrariness of the wizardly world. Then, that Heleth and Ard were forgotten is a metaphor showing how the “unorthodox” and the “illegitimate” were all erased out from people’s memory, in other word, the history.



Furthermore, the story could be related to Le Guin’s forgoing statement about literature. Ard and her magic may well symbolize women’s writing in literature. Just like Ard together with her magic were intentionally wiped out, most work by

women writers is drowned in the male-dominated literary field due to the birth of an idea—legitimacy. The concept of legitimacy comes, according to Le Guin, from men’s anxiety. Since men wouldn’t like to share their privileged status in the literary or, to be precise, any other field, they started to assert their possession of legitimacy in the attempt of stabilizing their authority. Claiming the ownership of legitimacy goes with an ever-lasting process of “purifying,” in Le Guin’s term. That is to say, strict censorship is imposed and exercised by the authority so as to keep the Canon pure from being contaminated by women’s low arts. A similar phenomenon can be drawn from the Earthsea world, too. The wizardly society in the Earthsea world, same as most fields in the real world, is highly hierarchical and patriarchal. To be specific, Roke’s knowledge of wizardry is regarded as the only legitimate magic—the Canon while the wizardly skills from other places are categorized into the stigmatized witchery—women’s writing and thus must be removed or they might endanger the purity of the canonized wizardry and then break the original balance of the magical world. Therefore, that the wizards must be disciplined under the spell of chastity throughout their lives signifies the purifying process. Being celibate has become a mystified and somehow unquestionable belief in the wizardly society because most wizards are firmly convinced that keeping their magic pure through holding on to celibacy, according to the Rule of Roke, is the only way to great accomplishments.



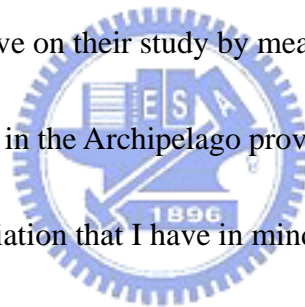
But could it be possible that no wizards have never noticed the big scheme hidden behind the spell of chastity because they are all too blindly pursuing the great power in the wake of certain achievements? To be honest, I don't think so. Instead, I believe that wizards, especially the Roke Masters, are aware of the whole plot. They do not talk about celibacy; they prefer doing it because they know how talking might lead to further understanding. It is their greatest fear that people start to realize "celibacy isn't as necessary as the Rule of Roke teaches" for "it's not a way of keeping their power pure, but of keeping the power to themselves" ("Dragonfly" 200).

Le Guin even offers a counterproof to show the ridiculousness of celibacy in "A Description of Earthsea." For Le Guin, the necessity of keeping celibate is merely "a psychological fact," without which "it appears that the connection between magic and sexuality may depend on the man, the magic, and the circumstances" (279). For instance, it is beyond question that "so great a mage as Morred¹⁹ was a husband and father" (279).

It is then plain to see that keeping the purity of wizardry indeed helps to maintain the balance of the Earthsea world, only the so-called balance, or equilibrium, is founded on a biased dualistic system that excludes the others and brings about a

¹⁹ Morred, also known as the Mage-King, the White Enchanter, and the Young King, "was the first man, and the first king, to be called Mage" ("Description" in *Tales* 260). Morred's life story is recorded in *The Deed of Morred*, which is one of the earliest epics that are still widespread in Earthsea. (For more information about Morred, please see "Description" in *Tales* 260-63.) His multiple identities as a king, a wizard, a husband, and a father prove that a wizard does not have to live under the spell of chastity and still can accomplish great achievements.

hierarchical authority. That is to say, it is not a balance for all; it is a balance for a small group of privileged wizards who desire to continue their domination over the magical world. But it also costs the wizards a lot of sacrifices in order to maintain the status quo. Being celibate, which signifies giving up their sexuality, is the beginning. As a result, almost all the masters and apprentices in Roke School must live in the secluded Great House, where women are absolutely not allowed to enter, so that the wizards can study their magic without distraction. Certainly, the independent and thus isolated wizardly society ensures both the masters and students being celibate and concentrative on their study by means of sexual segregation, and Roke School's great influence in the Archipelago proves its strategy a big success. However, an alternative association that I have in mind might cast a shadow on the success: Most prisons, just like Roke School, are sex segregated as well. In this sense, the wizards could be regarded prisoners who are subject to the spell of chastity. In addition, as Diamond's master, Hemlock, told him, "The entanglement of family, friends, and so on is precisely what you need to be free of" ("Darkrose and Diamond" 115). In other words, wizards must be independent of relationships of every kind because they are required to be so single-minded that any relationships could only be obstacles in their pursuit of power. It is a bargain. What the wizards have traded for greater power is their freedom—the freedom to have lust, the freedom to love, and



the freedom to be a complete being.

But it is no need to pity the imprisoned wizards because they choose to be trapped in the cage. If Roke School is the prison for wizards who must be subject to its regulations—the Rule of Roke, Earthsea is a larger prison for all the others.

Although the wizards do sacrifice their own freedom, they make sacrifices for greater power. Then after the wizards obtain the dominant power, they have the whole

magical world and people in their hands. That is, the wizards are in fact practicing wizardry for personal benefits at the expense of the freedom of all the others. In

order to free the whole magical world, the first step that must be taken is to disclose the problematics of the centralized authority—Roke School and its wizards.

Therefore, in this chapter I focus on deconstructing the hierarchical wizardly society by means of textual analysis, attempting to reveal the injustice in the apparently

dualistic world. Some of the citations in this chapter are drawn from the first trilogy;

they show the dominant perspective on wizardry and the magical world after the

wizardly hierarchy and authority were established. Quite a few citations throughout

this chapter are from *Tales from Earthsea* in the second trilogy. With its wide span

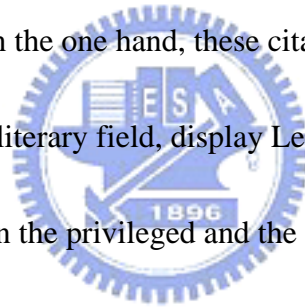
of time, *Tales* makes a big contribution to our understanding of the magical world

prior to *A Wizard of Earthsea* and serves as a bridge between the past, the present, and

the future Earthsea. Even if each of the five stories and the end piece in *Tales* is



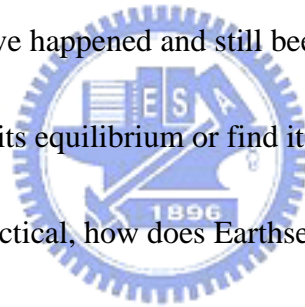
independent and has its own theme, they are, to a great extent, closely entangled with the same message about upcoming changes—changes that Le Guin would love to see happening not just in Earthsea but also in the real world. Some facts that readers used to take for granted in the first trilogy, like only man can study wizardry on Roke, are questioned and even subverted by the facts that are offered in the second trilogy. These subversions, I would argue, could be attributed to Le Guin’s change of mind, especially her ever-growing feminist awareness, in her writing career. This is exactly why I allude to her non-fiction pieces written between the publications of the first and second trilogies. On the one hand, these citations, though most of them are originally associated with the literary field, display Le Guin’s speculation upon the current power relation between the privileged and the stigmatized in every aspect of our life. According to her comments, readers can get a clue that Le Guin is not satisfied with the status quo because the real world often tends to be more totalitarian than democratic. On the other hand, her words in these citations foreshow the possible changes that she is going to “discover” in the second Earthsea trilogy. That is to say, she has noticed some irrationality and absurdity of the Earthsea world structure in the first trilogy. So she travels back to the earliest times in Earthsea in order to find out how the hierarchical order of the wizardly world was set up. Then she turns around to the present and specifies the crucial problems rooted in the highly



hierarchical and patriarchal wizardly world, trying to warn her readers of the danger of her previous assumptions concerning the balance and equilibrium in Earthsea.

She is looking forward to changes because the balance or equilibrium that depends on a small group of privileged wizards to hold the world together is not what Le Guin wishes to see. Hence, she keeps moving on to the future Earthsea in the sixth book—*The Other Wind* for she would like to broaden the horizons of her readers with a different vision that she has recently found in the magical world.

But what exactly has Le Guin discovered or been looking for in Earthsea? In other words, what changes have happened and still been happening? With the changes, can Earthsea restore its equilibrium or find itself a new order and finally settle down? To be more practical, how does Earthsea along with its changes reflect Le Guin's prospect of the real world? Here are another bundle of unanswered questions. Hence, in the following chapter I would like to make a thorough investigation on *The Other Wind* and attempt to illustrate the changed and still changing Earthsea world as well as an ever-growing mind of a great women writer.



Chapter 3

Toward A Democratic Order in Earthsea

In the second chapter I have attempted, by virtue of textual analysis, to dismantle Roke School—the hierarchical authority in the dualistic Earthsea world. Le Guin’s descriptions on the school, its wizards and the whole wizardly hierarchy in the second trilogy, particularly in *Tales from Earthsea*, apparently collide with those in the first trilogy, which shows her distrust to the previous hypotheses in the first three Earthsea books. Thanks to the developing feminist awareness as displayed in her non-fictional pieces, Le Guin gradually realizes that the balance and equilibrium of Earthsea is founded on a dualistic basis that comprises a series of man-made stigmatization and discrimination against women, Nature and all the minorities—namely, the Other. For the privileged wizards, as a result, the greatest mission is to maintain not simply the equilibrium but their domination over Earthsea. As the centralized authority in Earthsea, Roke School plays the most significant role in upholding the Rule of Roke, which seems to seek out balance for the world but actually guarantees Roke wizards’ dominant position by distaining and then excluding the Other. On the one hand, the deconstruction of the wizard school along with its regulations helps readers learn of the inherent injustice in the highly hierarchical

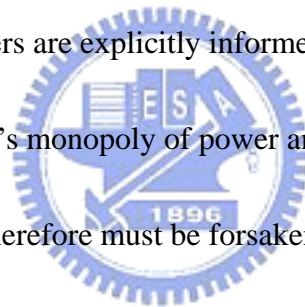
wizardly world; on the other hand, it connects Earthsea to the real life because this kind of unjust power relation exists both in the magical and the real worlds.

Earthsea, in this sense, is Le Guin's reflection on reality. It is obvious that Le Guin does not care for the hierarchical structure either in Earthsea or in the real world, so in *Tales from Earthsea* she reviews Earthsea's past and then puts forward quite a few elements that challenge and thus destabilize the wizardly hierarchy, hoping to change the somewhat rigid power structure and gender construction of the first trilogy. It is these subversive facts posed in *Tales* that I have discussed in the second chapter.

Although Le Guin has deconstructed the wizardly authority and motivated readers to rethink the essence of the wizardly hierarchy through the historical review, she has not made radical changes to overturn the hierarchical order until she travels back to its present—in “Dragonfly,” the last story in *Tales*, and in *The Other Wind*. Therefore, in this chapter I would like to delve into the principal changes that now are taking place in Earthsea. In addition to representing Le Guin's rethinking on the wizardly world, these changes, I would argue, will lead Earthsea to a new social order that also reveals the writer's expectations for the real world—one that tends to be democratic rather than hierarchical.

This chapter is divided into four parts. First of all, I will read the novella “Dragonfly” as a bridge between the fourth and the sixth Earthsea books—*Tehanu* and

The Other Wind. Besides, its main protagonist—Irian, who is both human and dragon—blurs the originally rigid boundaries of human and animal and destabilizes the hierarchical hegemony established by male-dominated Roke School with its disciplines. In other words, the appearance of Irian highlights the beginning of changes and simultaneously foreshadows the decline of the biased dualistic structure in Earthsea. Secondly, I will investigate the changing view of wizardry and the meaning of dragons in *The Other Wind*, in which the most crucial modifications are made and being made in order to get Earthsea out of the dualistic entrapment. In this latest Earthsea book, the readers are explicitly informed that the appropriation of wizardry, which signifies men's monopoly of power and greed for immortality, tears the magical world apart and therefore must be forsaken so as to mend the world. Only through giving up on wizardry, that is, abandoning the wizardly hierarchy or, in a broader sense, relinquishing the dualistic world order can the unbalanced power relation in Earthsea be changed into a more equal one. Yet what needs to be mended is not only the world but also humanity. *The Other Wind* provides readers with another important fact that human and dragon are from the same roots despite that they have been separated since long ago. In the first trilogy, dragons are represented as evil beings against humans, just like witches versus wizards, and they are expelled to the furthest Western Reach by men. Le Guin's dragons, in this sense, symbolize



the excluded others in Earthsea—women, children, the disabled, the elderly and so on. In addition to the exiled minorities, part of humanity—such as sexuality—has been repressed and twisted by the wizardly hierarchy. Similarly, many of the Earthsea dragons have been damaged by the male constructed world so severely that they lose certain inherent capacities, such as flying, speaking and reasoning, and then become totally irrational. For this reason, I would argue that the Earthsea dragons serve as a trope for the repressed part of humanity—the primitive, the wild, the uncontrollable and the animal. Consequently, in the third part of this chapter I would like to probe into the changing images of dragons in Earthsea Cycle, trying to find out how Le Guin’s dragons help with the recovery of the world and that of humanity. Finally, I will specify all the major changes from the first to the second trilogy in the last part of the chapter. These changes can best manifest Le Guin’s feminist transformation and the power shifts in the fictional world—a movement from an order of oppression to that of freedom. By re-placing power, Le Guin has revised Earthsea, a revision which projects her expectations for the real world.

“Dragonfly” is the last story in *Tales from Earthsea* as well as a “dragon bridge” between *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind* as Le Guin claims in the foreword of *Tales* (xv). For one thing, the story happens some time after the end of *Tehanu* and before the start of *The Other Wind*. Chronologically speaking, “Dragonfly” bridges

the time gap between the fourth and the sixth Earthsea book. For another, although suspicion and doubt about the wizardly hierarchy have been brought forth, there are no concrete attempts being made to challenge or change the hierarchical authority in *Tehanu*. In other words, the function of the fourth book is to equip its readers with subversive feminist reflection on the hierarchical social order in Earthsea. Yet the crucial challenges and changes, after being implicitly foreshadowed in *Tehanu*, need some time to mature. They will begin to emerge in “Dragonfly” and soon flourish in *The Other Wind*. “Dragonfly,” on this account, serves as a bridge again because this novella in *Tales* connects the deconstructive thoughts in *Tehanu* and the upcoming radical changes in *The Other Wind*. To be more accurate, it is the rethinking of the wizardly hierarchy in the fourth book that brings about the initial challenges to the centralized authority—Roke School—in “Dragonfly”; furthermore, it is the surfacing challenges in “Dragonfly” that give rise to a changed social order in the sixth book. That “Dragonfly” is the bridge of the two texts is therefore certain. But what exactly are the challenges that occur in this story and how do they connect *Tehanu* and *The Other Wind*? After a brief summary of the story, I would like to scrutinize, in the following, these challenges and their significances.

Dragonfly is the daughter of a declining landlord who used to own a rich domain called Iria on the island of Way. Her mother, a mysterious woman that

“came from some other island...somewhere in the west,” died in giving birth to her (185). Being left alone to her irresponsible drunkard father, Dragonfly grows up to be extraordinarily undisciplined but sturdy. Her life starts to change radically after she is given her true name—Irian—by the witch Rose, who feels very uneasy and confused about the girl’s true name as if it is unfinished. Then, Irian meets a young wizard named Ivory—an expelled student from Roke. Ivory reveals a lot of inside information about Roke School, with which Irian is so fascinated that she longs to go there, hoping to learn of what she really is in the school. After Ivory is aware of Irian’s aspiration, he makes up a plan to help her enter the wizardly school though his assistance is not fully out of good will. On the one hand, Ivory wishes to take revenge for his drop-out and make fun of the Masters as well as the Rule of Roke by getting Irian—a woman—into the school. On the other hand, he wants to gain her trust and, more importantly, her true name so he may cast a spell to force her to sleep with him, but this attempt comes to no effect in the end.



On their way to Roke School, Ivory changes Irian’s appearance and makes her look like a boy by a semblance spell in order to fool the guardian of the Great House—Master Doorkeeper. The Doorkeeper is not fooled, however. Even if he always has the Rule of Roke—no women are allowed—in mind, the Doorkeeper still lets Irian in and believes that she “may have come to us [the Masters of Roke] seeking

not only what she needs to know, but also what we need to know” (216). The Doorkeeper’s decision results in a serious quarrel and a schism between the Masters. Those insisting on upholding the Rule of Roke and thus resisting Irian’s entrance are led by Thorion—Master Summoner, who craves to replace Ged and be the new Archmage; to them, Irian’s intrusion is going to endanger not only the school but also the equilibrium of Earthsea for “[s]he can bring only confusion, dissension, and further weakness among us,” as Thorion states (218). Due to Thorion and his followers’ opposition, Irian is restricted from entering the Great House; as a result, she is sent to the Immanent Grove to stay with Master Patterner—Azver, who has foreseen the coming of Irian and the possible changes she is going to bring to Roke. Staying in the Grove keeps Irian a perfect distance from the Great House, so she may see through the nature of Roke School and Thorion’s ambition. She gradually realizes that the school is nothing more than “stone walls enclosing one kind of being and keeping out all others, like a pen, a cage” (231) and Thorion has returned from the Dry Land²⁰ to consolidate the wizardly hierarchy only for the good of the privileged



²⁰ In *The Farthest Shore*, the Archmage Ged and the king-to-be Arren went to the Dry Land, that is the Death Land, in order to destroy the destabilizing power that threatened the equilibrium of Earthsea. The Summoner of Roke, Thorion, was so worried about their safety that he brought his spirit to Ged with his wizardly skills (*Shore* 183-91). When Ged met Thorion in the Dry Land, he asked the Summoner to cross the wall between the living and the dead, and go back to the living world (*Shore* 228-29), which proves to be a wrong decision later. The readers are clearly informed in *Shore* that Thorion became a living dead after his spirit traveled to the Dry Land but without an explicit clue about what has happened to Thorion afterwards. Then in “Dragonfly” from *Tales*, Master Patterner related to Irian the subsequent happenings and completed the event. According to the Patterner, Thorion had returned from death before the eldest dragon, Kalession, brought Ged with Arren back to Roke. Then Kalession took Ged away to his hometown—Gont Island, since Ged had lost all his wizardly power and was no wizard any longer. When the dragon took off, Thorion fell down and “lay as if dead, cold,

wizards, instead of all the other Earthsea people. So Irian's mission, as she claims to Master Patterner, is to put an end to the wizardly school as well as Master Summoner (237). In the end, Thorion comes to destroy Irian for she "defies the Rule of Roke" and will "break the pattern [the order]" (242). When they confront each other, Irian, against all expectations, reveals her true form, which explains why her true name is not finished—she transforms into a dragon and eliminates Thorion. Then she flies to her people—the dragons—in the place beyond the West in search of her complete true name. Before she leaves, she gives Azver her promise that she will surely come back to Roke if he ever calls.



The significance of the story lies in that it poses a great challenge and then causes a fundamental change to the wizardly authority. The Doorkeeper's letting Irian in the Great House constitutes an enormous menace to the Rule of Roke, according to which women are forbidden to enter the school. However, as is discussed in the second chapter of the thesis, the arts of wizardry was able to be kept and passed down largely owing to the Women of the Hand—a loose wizardly organization formed up by women with very few men. Besides, when Roke School,

his heart not beating, yet he breathed" (*Tales* 228). The other Masters thought the Summoner was dead and thus had the young king replaced his place in their council in order to choose a new archmage. In the council, the Patterner gave the prophetic words—"A woman on Gont" but no one understood the meaning of the prophecy. Before long, Thorion summoned himself back into life, as he was going to be buried, and claimed "The young king had had no place among us" as well as " 'a woman on Gont,' whoever she may be, has no place among the men on Roke" (*Tales* 229-30). Since then, Thorion, the living dead, had clearly shown his ambition to be the Archmage and made others believe that being the Archmage was his mission and destiny. However, some of the Masters could not approve of it since Thorion broke the boundary between life and death, which was surely against the law of nature.

whose predecessor is the Hand, was first established, it gave admittance to both male and female students. The above facts show that women are not born to be less capable of understanding or learning wizardry than men; yet, women were still driven away, as Roke School was gradually becoming institutionalized and centralized, on the ground that they might corrupt the purity of wizardry. As a result, before Irian, there has not been a single woman being allowed to enter the school for such a long time that the Earthsea people have taken it for granted that Roke School, attributing its exclusive access to men, is not where women should ever go. Irian, for this reason, plays a particularly essential role in unmaking the fixed rules forged by dominant men. To be precise, Irian's "intrusion" presents a huge threat to the wizardly authority because it may invoke the memories about the earliest history of Roke's establishment, in which women used to participate as well. It is the very part of Roke's history that the wizards have tried to hide and even erase by clinging to their made-up rules in spite of challenges or changes. So, they are afraid of Irian for her transgression against the Rule of Roke is a crucial challenge that leads to further understanding in the complete history and the genuine nature of the wizardly authority. Once Roke's history is fully displayed and then restored as a whole, the dirty secrets of the male-dominated authority will be revealed—keeping wizardry pure is nothing other than an excuse that ensures men with the sole control over the high arts of wizardry



and excludes women from the authority that grows more institutionalized, centralized and thus powerful. That is to say, the Rule of Roke, in a broader sense, is a cloak for men's ambition to monopolize power by depriving women of their right to proper training in wizardry and reducing them to an inferior status in the hierarchical world. Then, it is plain to see why Thorion and his supporters try to expel and even destroy Irian in order to vindicate the Rule of Roke.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenge to Roke School, Irian has brought a vital change to the wizardly authority by exterminating Master Summoner—Thorion.

That Thorion summoned himself from death is motivated by his ambition, which has been implicitly revealed in *Shore*²¹ and distinctly manifested in “Dragonfly.”

According to the Summoner, “Lebannen is not truly king, since no archmage crowned him;”²² therefore, Lebannen needs “the true crown,” that is, “a second coronation” on

Roke by the Archmage Thorion (“Dragonfly” 235). The Summoner's attempt is to persuade people of the assumption that Earthsea's equilibrium hinges on the

²¹ As early as in the second chapter of *The Farthest Shore*, Thorion has unfolded his eagerness to prove himself. When Ged was determined to take Arren, instead of any of the Roke Masters, in search of the black things that threatened Roke's wizardry and Earthsea's equilibrium, Thorion showed his distrust to Ged's decision, considering Arren incapable of being a suitable companion for this great mission. Therefore, he volunteered to replace Arren but was refused by Ged. Although Thorion's craving for the task did not convince the Archmage Ged, it gave rise to Arren's self-doubts. In order to cast aside the young prince's doubts, Ged honestly told Arren that Thorion was just jealous and thus desperate to prove his loyalty and show off his great skills to the Archmage. (*Shore* 31-36) I would argue that Ged's remark on Thorion pinpoints the Summoner's ambition for excellence, which will grow so much stronger as to force him to come back from death for the position of the Archmage.

²² After his messengers failed their mission—conveying Lebannen's wish to have Ged crown for him, Lebannen went to Gont in person to visit Ged but in vain. Ged wouldn't like to crown Lebannen not because he refused to admit Lebannen's legitimacy as the king but because he, having lost all the wizardly power, was no longer the Archmage. As a result, Lebannen crowned himself to be the king of all Earthsea without the presence of an archmage. (*Tehanu* 95-115, 161-82)

cooperation between the King and the Archmage; thereupon, he returned from the Dry Land, just like King Lebannen did, to restore order to the world.

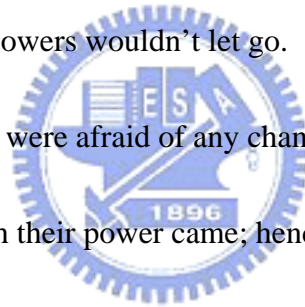
Although the foregoing assumption has been widely accepted in Earthsea for centuries, it is an invention that twists the genuine history and consists of wizards' ambition. Based on "A Description of Earthsea," "[t]he name and office of *archmage* were invented by Halkel," during the dark time when Earthsea had no king on the throne, "and the Archmage of Roke was a tenth Master, never counted among the Nine" (278).²³ Halkel was not only the first Archmage of Roke but also the key person that turned Roke School into the centralized authority of Earthsea in virtue of institutionalization and hierarchicalization. While the throne remained empty, the Archmage of Roke, in the king's stead, "exerted considerable political power" in addition to the "ethical and intellectual force"; however, "it appears that this office [of archmage], not originally part of the governance of the school or of the Archipelago, is no longer useful or appropriate" subsequent to "the coronation of King Lebannen and the restoration of the High Courts and Councils in Havnor" (278).

That is to say, an archmage is, after all, a substitute for a king and the office of

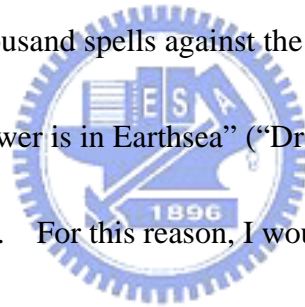
²³ When Roke School was first established, the founders also set up Roke Council, which includes Nine Masters—Windkey, Hand, Herbal, Changer, Summoner, Namer, Patternner, Finder, and Doorkeeper. After some years, Halkel of Way "abolished the title of Finder, replacing it with Chanter" ("A Description of Earthsea" 277) and invented the title of archmage, making it the tenth Master and, more importantly, the leader in the Council. In Halkel's term of office, Roke School turned firmly institutionalized, developed a strictly-defined wizardly hierarchy and then became the centralized authority of Earthsea in place of the king's governance. For this reason, I would argue that the Archmage of Roke, a man-made construct, plays the most significant role in consolidating the wizardly hierarchy and sustaining the superior status of wizards.

archmage should become invalid once there is king in Earthsea again. In the end of *The Farthest Shore*, Ged lost all his wizardry and was no archmage any longer while Prince Arren, after the painstaking journey, became mature and was a changed person—King Lebannen, which has foreshadowed that an archmage is no longer needed due to the coming of a king. Consequently, that Ged asked Arren to leave his wizardly staff—a phallic symbol—in the Dry Land (*Shore* 254), I would argue, signifies not only the renunciation of his wizardry but also the end of the rule of the Archmage as well as that of Roke School and the patriarchal authority it symbolizes.

But Thorion and his followers wouldn't let go. These wizards were so obsessed with power that they were afraid of any changes to the seemingly fixed wizardly hierarchy from which their power came; hence, they supported Thorion to succeed Ged as the Archmage and acquiesced the great ambition of the living dead at the risk of interfering with the life-and-death laws, hoping that the wizardly hierarchy and their superior status could be re-consolidated. Master Patterner made a pertinent metaphor that clarifies the authentic relationship between the archmage and the king and distinguishes the inappropriateness of the wizards' insistence upon the maintenance of the wizardly hierarchy—"Hard for the housekeeper to give up the keys when the owner comes home" ("Dragonfly" 235). In other words, the archmage is like a housekeeper who temporarily watches over the house—the



kingdom—for the true owner—the king. The owner has been gone for too long so that the housekeeper gradually forgets his real identity and even claims to own the house when the owner comes back. Fortunately, Irian successfully stops the ambition of the wizards and secures the laws of life and death by means of the destruction of the Summoner, who returned from death for the position of the Archmage. Except for the invention of the title and office of archmage, the originally loose wizardly organization could not have developed into the highly institutionalized and centralized hierarchy. Even if “Roke lives on its great past, [and is still] defended by a thousand spells against the present day,” the wizardly school “is no longer where power is in Earthsea” (“Dragonfly” 198) and cannot fight against the upcoming changes. For this reason, I would argue that the wizardly hierarchy will come tumbling down step by step without the office of archmage; only after the collapse of the hierarchy can a new social order come along under the rule of the King, his Councils, and his Courts. Irian’s contributions, consequently, are not simply to challenge the Rule of Roke by intruding into the Great House but, more importantly, to change the frame of the centralized Roke School by putting a definite end to the office of archmage. Yet this is just the first change made to undo the wizardly hierarchy. In the latest Earthsea book—*The Other Wind*, Le Guin shows us some other major changes that are taking place in Earthsea and lead the world all the



way to a new social order.

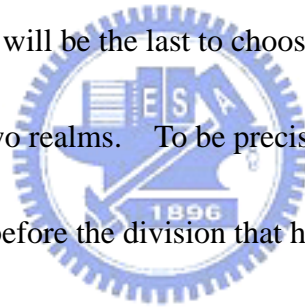
The Other Wind, the sixth and currently the last volume in Earthsea Cycle, further illuminates the nature of the wizardly hierarchy and then undermines it. The story begins with a sorcerer—Alder, who is talented in mending broken things. Ever since the death of his wife—Lily, who was also a gifted mender, Alder has had dreams in which his dead wife and other spirits of deceased people summon him to release them from the other side of the wall that divides the Dry Land from the living world. Alder is so besieged with the increasingly constant dreams that he goes to Gont for Ged's help after a short stay on Roke, where the Patterner suggested him visiting the former and last archmage of Roke—the only wizard that crossed the wall, repaired the division and then returned alive. Although Alder's dreams remind Ged of his own experience in the Dry Land, the ex-archmage does not know how to cope with the sorcerer's problem because Alder's dreams are too real to be just dreams, and he can only infer that “[s]omething is happening, is changing” in the Dry Land and in whole Earthsea; yet even if “it happens through you [Alder] and to you, you are its instrument and not its cause” (34). Therefore, Ged sends the sorcerer with a letter to Havnor in search of “A Woman on Gont”—Tehanu, believing that his foster daughter will be able to decipher the messages conveyed by those dreams.

Earlier on, Tenar and Tehanu are invited to the palace for King Lebannen, being

troubled with the disturbance caused by mad dragons in the West Reach, hopes to obtain their advice. After reading Ged's letter and listening to Alder's dreams, the king has a hunch that these dreams may have something to do with the madness of the dragons, so he turns to Tehanu for further help as is suggested in Ged's letter, which consists of two crucial questions—"Who are those who go to the dry land?" and "Will a dragon cross the wall of stones?" (78) According to Tehanu's understanding, only the spirits of humans, rather than those of dragons or other animals, will cross the wall and go to the Dry Land after they are dead. She is not sure of the reason that humans alone need to go there, though. As a result, she calls to Irian, who is both human and dragon like herself, in order to realize why dragons keep causing turmoil in the west, why there are no other beings than humans in the Dry Land, and the connection between these two things. Irian relates what she heard from the eldest dragon, Kalessin, and explains the root of the current disturbances happening in the West Reach to the king and the representatives from all Earthsea in the Dragon Council.

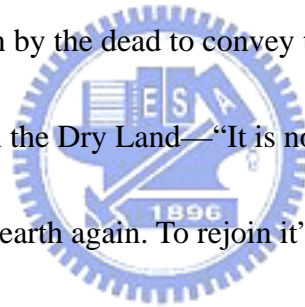
Based on Irian's description, humans and dragons were once one race, but over time some pursued possessions while others looked for absolute freedom. Hence, there came the division—*verw nadan*—between human and dragon—"Long ago we chose. We [Dragons] chose freedom. Men chose the yoke. We chose fire and wind. They [Men] chose water and earth. We chose the west, and they the east" (128).

However, greedy men were not content with their share, so they broke the oath of division and “stole half our [dragons’] realm beyond the west...and made walls of spells to keep us [dragons] out of it [the Dry Land]” (128). For this reason, some dragons are causing disturbances in the Inner Lands, trying to drive men away from the west to the farthest east. Being the last of the kind—both human and dragon, Irian and Tehanu are “the messengers, the bringers of choice” (129). Irian has tried to persuade those angry dragons in the human world to cease attacks, forget all the resentment at the oath-breakers, and choose to fly with her on the other wind to beyond the west since Tehanu will be the last to choose. After Tehanu, there will be no more traffic between the two realms. To be precise, Irian and Tehanu’s task is to re-secure the division. Yet, before the division that has been broken is re-built again, they must find out what the pattern of changes in Earthsea signifies in order to solve the disturbances in the Dry Land.



Along with Tehanu and Irian, King Lebannen, Tenar, the sorcerer Alder, Roke wizard Onyx, Pelnish wizard Seppel and Princess Sesarakh of the Kargad journey to the Immanent Grove on Roke—the center of things, hoping to understand more about the changing Earthsea. Through piecing together various ancient lore of Earthsea’s history from the participants, things gradually clear up. In order to obtain immortality, men started to work on wizardry by virtue of restoring the Old Speech,

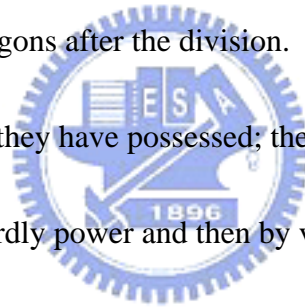
which should belong to dragons instead of humans after the division. The Dry Land was originally part of dragons' realm beyond the west, but it was walled up with spells by greedy wizards who longed for immortality. Although the Dry Land was supposed to be a man-construct paradise where human spirits could remain forever, after the wall of stones were established, the wind stopped blowing, the water stopped flowing and the stars stopped glowing—everything became still and lifeless. It turns out that the spirits of the Hardic people²⁴ are miserably trapped in the Dry Land and can never rejoin the life-and-death circle. Consequently, Alder, the mender, is a messenger, too. He is chosen by the dead to convey their common hope of being released from the sufferings in the Dry Land—“It is not life they [the dead] yearn for. It is death. To be one with the earth again. To rejoin it” (195). In the end, Alder finally realizes that his mission is to mend the world through breaking the wall, so he comes to the wall of stones and breaks it with the help of the dragons, the wizards, and the king. After the man-made wall collapses, the division is finally completed—“[w]hat was built is broken” and “[w]hat was broken is made whole” (206). All the dragons, including Tehanu, fly on the other wind to the west beyond the west, leaving the Earthsea people their choice and their realm—a world full of



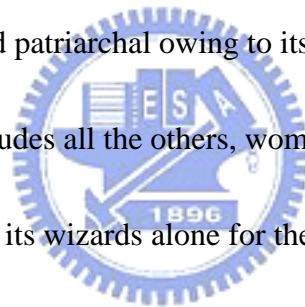
²⁴ The Kargish people, unlike the Hardic, have given up the Old Speech after the division; besides, they never try to misappropriate wizardry, considering it against the laws of nature. Therefore, only the Hardic, who greatly depend on the wizardly power in most aspects of life and even built the Dry Land with spells, need to go to the limbo-like place after death, while the Kargish, like all animals, will rejoin the life-and-death circle. This is why there are no other beings but the spirits of the Hardic in the Dry Land. (*Wind* 103-05)

possibilities and uncertainties.

The main purpose of *The Other Wind* is to carry on the unfinished task—undoing the wizardly hierarchy—in *Tehanu* and in “Dragonfly.” As Ged once said, “To deny the past is to deny the future” (*Shore* 36); in this latest Earthsea book, Le Guin has shown her readers the most ancient history of Earthsea about the division, which unfolds the nature of wizardry, deconstructs Roke School, unsettles the hierarchy and then ushers in a new order in Earthsea. According to the “verw nadan,” Earthsea people are supposed to give up the Language of the Making because the Old Speech belongs to dragons after the division. Yet, the Hardic are too greedy to ever be satisfied with what they have possessed; they secretly restored the Old Speech for obtaining the wizardly power and then by virtue of spells they built a “wonderland” where their souls could remain immortal. It proves that it is only their wishful thinking, however. The Hardic have paid their price for trespassing upon the Old Speech—their souls must be imprisoned in the Dry Land and never rejoin the life-and-death circle. The history of the division and the description of the Dry Land successfully reverse readers’ previous perceptions of the magical world. More importantly, while Le Guin is subverting the whole wizardly hierarchy, she is also conveying essential messages that direct at the negative aspects of human nature. That the Hardic people wish to obtain immortality and to cross the limits of nature



laws may symbolize the endless avarice and ambition of mankind. In order to achieve their goal, the Hardic people have attempted to re-gain the use of the Old Speech, which stands for the ultimate power in Earthsea. But no men can master the Language of the Making as well as the dragons because it is impossible for men to own absolute control over everything. So the Hardic turn to wizardry, become wizards and then create a hierarchy in which most things are under their control. The wizardly power could be regarded, to a great extent, as a metaphor for political power; thus, the wizardly hierarchy is highly political. As the centralized authority, Roke School is totalitarian and patriarchal owing to its extreme exclusiveness—it is a self-confined society that excludes all the others, women in particular, and keeps its power, like a secret, strictly to its wizards alone for the sake of their superior status in the hierarchy. When the wizards claim to do wizardry for the good of all Earthsea people, they are actually engaged in a dirty bargain—trading for wizardry at the price of their and others' souls. Trading souls for power is, of course, another metaphor. On the one hand, the wizards must suppress or even twist part of humanity, such as being celibate, in order to have “pure” control over wizardry and secure the wizardly hierarchy. That the spirits of the deceased wizards are eternally incarcerated in the Dry Land may signify the ever-lastingly repetitive process of repressing their humanity. To be precise, none of the wizards can escape from the repression of

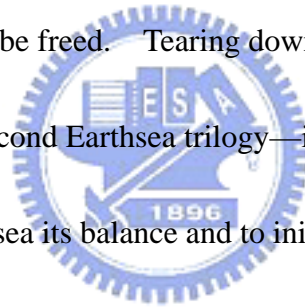


humanity even through putting an end to their lives because they are not to be given death. But it does not mean that the wizards who can never die will gain immortality. What remains immortal is the non-stop repressive process as well as the wizardly hierarchy that has recourse to the distortion of humanity. On the other hand, it is not just the privileged wizards but all the Hardic, including those without any magical crafts, who must go to the Dry Land after passing away. That is to say, the wizards acquire the sole access to wizardry by way of treading on the sacrifice of the powerless mundanes. In this sense, the captive spirits of the powerless in the Dry Land, I would argue, are the portrait of the minorities in the real world, who are forced to succumb to the dominated and cannot get out of the Dry-Land-like patriarchal hierarchy. As Le Guin puts it in *Shore*, humans can easily upset the balance of the world if the laws of nature are meddled with out of greed:

When we crave for power over life—endless wealth, unassailable safety, immortality—then desire becomes greed. And if knowledge allies itself to that greed, then comes evil. Then the balance of the world is swayed, and ruins weighs heavy in the scale. (46-47)

Men—especially the highly educated, like wizards in Earthsea—should not have personal longings prior to the welfare of the others, or the balance of the world will be endangered. The hierarchy, either in Earthsea or in reality, being founded upon

men's endless pursuit of or, more accurately, greed for ultimate power over life has obviously caused the greatest imbalance. In addition, that men intend to build, against the nature laws, a wonderland in quest of immortality but end up with a dreary death land proves the monstrosity of men's greed and the limitation of men's capacity. Similarly, the artificial hierarchy that results in the deformation of humanity and the oppression of the minorities is totally a fiasco. As a result, in the end of *The Other Wind* the man-made wall of stones and the whole wizardly hierarchy—both are patriarchal products—are meant to fall apart, only then can the repressed humanity and the suppressed minorities be freed. Tearing down the wall, that is, undoing the hierarchy—the motif in the second Earthsea trilogy—is the most crucial change that is made in *Wind* to restore Earthsea its balance and to initiate a new order.



In addition, the readers are acquainted with more knowledge about the mystic dragons—the positive qualities in particular—through *The Other Wind*, in which the three dragons, including Tehanu, Irian and Kalessin, play extremely significant roles and assist humans in the destruction of the wall and the hierarchy. However, the Earthsea dragons do not have a fixed image; on the contrary, the depictions of the dragons and the connotations these symbolic beings carry are evolving in response to the changes taking place in Earthsea. In other words, the changing images of the dragons represent Le Guin's rich reflection on the magical and the practical worlds.

In this section, therefore, I would like to delve into what the Earthsea dragons symbolize and how they reflect Le Guin’s change of mind in the following passage, even though Le Guin concludes in the “Forward” to *Tales from Earthsea* that “things change: authors and wizards are not always to be trusted: nobody can explain a dragon” (xvii).

In the first Earthsea book—*A Wizard of Earthsea*, the Dragon of Pendor, Yevaud, and its offspring are called, in Ged’s perspective, “worms” and “baneful lizards” (95) that threaten men’s territory.²⁵ The mythic dragons tend to be described as evil beings in opposition to human beings because *Wizard* is still trapped, to a certain extent, in the one-dimensional binary spectrum of good and evil, which transforms dragons’ otherness into the negative side of humanity. Briefly speaking, the dragons are shaped as the enemy of mankind owing to the over-simplistic dualistic logic. The Earthsea dragons start to become too complicated to stand for the absolute evil in the third book—*The Farthest Shore*, in which Ged told Arren:

The dragons are avaricious, insatiable, treacherous; without pity, without remorse. But are they evil? Who am I, to judge the acts of

²⁵ Pendor Island had originally been inhabited by the Hardic people. Located in the Inner Lands, Pendor is men’s territory and there should be no dragons on it. However, dragons led by Yevaud suddenly came from the West Reach, drove out the inhabitants from the island and took possession of all their property. Ged’s mission was to ensure the boundary between men’s and dragons’ realms. The wizard sailed to Pendor, slew the young dragons as a warning and made a deal with Yevaud, forcing the old dragon to promise that its race would never intrude the Inner Lands. (*Wizard* 92-101) Therefore, the dragons on Pendor are shaped as evil beings—the opposite of mankind—that endanger men’s safety and territory.

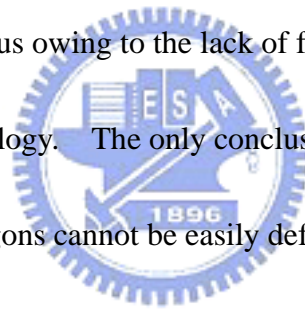
dragons? ...They are wiser than men are. It is with them as with dreams....We men dream dreams, we work magic, we do good, we do evil. The dragons do not dream. They are dreams. (48)

By comparing the dragons to dreams, Le Guin attempts to blur the seemingly fixed boundary between good and evil as well as the man-made opposite relationship between humans and dragons. The Earthsea dragons, like the inexplicable dreams, are neither good nor evil. Any deliberate interpretations of the dragons could be somehow misleading for the images of dragons are always so slippery that it is extremely difficult to catch the precise connotations that the dragons carry.

Moreover, dreams are wild, free and with no frames; they exist in human imagination as the dragons in Le Guin's mind. Therefore, the binary frame that arbitrarily defines good and evil must be forsaken in order to explain the dragons.

As is mentioned, the dragons that are portrayed as greedy, violent, tricky and wild animals in *Wizard* have very different representations in *Shore*. The main task for Ged and Arren in the third Earthsea book is to destroy the disturbing force that results in Earthsea's imbalance. After the archmage and the prince set out, an old dragon named Orm Embar showed them the correct directions to the black wizard—Cob. When they finally confronted Cob, Ged and Arren were subjected to Cob's malicious spell and could not escape. It is Orm Embar that sacrificed its own

life in order to save them. What's more, the eldest dragon—Kalessin—came to take Ged and Arren away from the Dry Land at the end of the battle in which Ged defeated Cob but he also lost all his power and was seriously hurt. To this point, the negative impressions of the Earthsea dragons from *Wizard* are turned upside-down—the dragons in *Shore* are not enemies but more like friends that do humans a great favor and expect no return. But why are Orm Embar and Kalessin, unlike Yevaud, willing to help mankind? That is to say, what makes Orm Embar and Kalessin different from Yevaud? Or are they really different? The above questions remain unsolved and thus the dragons mysterious owing to the lack of further information on these symbolic beings in the first trilogy. The only conclusion that could be inferred from the first trilogy is that the dragons cannot be easily defined based on men's judgment—they are beyond the dualistic divisions of good and evil, beyond human moralities.



With the publication of the second trilogy, the outline of what the Earthsea dragons represent is becoming clear. That dragons and humans share the same roots is the most significant hypothesis in the second trilogy because it reflects Le Guin's feminist awareness and subverts the dualistic assumptions, such as the opposite relationship between humans and dragons, in the first trilogy. The hypothesis is indirectly pointed out through Tenar's narration of Ogion's tale—"the Woman of

Kemay”²⁶ (*Tehanu* 12), in which the readers get to know the first of the exceptional beings that have both “human mind and dragon heart” (15). Interestingly, it is Therru, whose true name turns out to be Tehanu and true form a dragon,²⁷ that listened to the story. Therefore, the tale about the Woman of Kemay could be regarded as a foreshadowing of the revelation of Therru’s real identity and an awakening to what the Earthsea dragons may symbolize. After Tehanu, Le Guin introduces the third of the kind—Irian in “Dragonfly,” which is embodied in *Tales from Earthsea* as the link between the fifth and the sixth Earthsea books. It proves that Tehanu and Irian, especially the former, play essential roles in *The Other Wind* as they are also the last two of the kind. After Tehanu transforms and chooses to fly to the other side of the world, there will be no dragons in the human world. We can therefore hypothesize that Le Guin makes humans and dragons as one people in the second trilogy—it starts with the Woman of Kemay in *Tehanu*, develops in “Dragonfly” through Irian and then



²⁶ Ogion met an old fisherwoman in a place named Kemay on Gont Island and he was amazed at the first sight of the woman because he saw a dragon, instead of a human. Ogion thought that the woman might be a shape-changer, so he asked her “whether she was a woman who could change herself into a dragon” or the contrary (13). The fisherwoman answered him with an ancient song. According to the song, dragon and human used to be “one people, one race, winged, and speaking the True Language” in the beginning of time (14). However, “in time nothing can be without becoming” (14)—some dragon-people sought only the infinite freedom while others looked for greater possessions, so they became two peoples afterwards. Since then, the dragons, being the fewer of the two, had occupied the West Reach of Earthsea and left most lands to the numerous humans. But even after the separation, “there are those among us [humans] who know they once were dragons” and vice versa (15). That is to say, there are still a few rare beings that are both human and dragon till all the dragons fly “to the other side of the world”—the farthest west beyond the west, as the song concluded. (*Tehanu* 10-16)

²⁷ In the end of *Tehanu*, Ged and Tenar were at the mercy of an evil wizard named Aspen, who was the supporter of the black wizard, Cob. Therru was so desperate to save them that she called to the eldest dragon, Kalessin. Before long, Kalessin flew to Gont, destroyed Aspen and rescued the old couple. Then, Kalessin gave Therru her true name, Tehanu, and unfolded her true identity by calling her “child.” It is at this crucial moment that readers are at last sure of the fact that little Therru, now called Tehanu, is a dragon in human form. (*Tehanu* 272-78)

completes in Tehanu's transformation at the end of *The Other Wind*. But why is the hypothesis so important to the second trilogy? How does it subvert the first trilogy with Le Guin's feminist thought? To be more precise, how does this hypothesis clear up the originally obscure connotations that the Earthsea dragons convey? In order to answer these questions, it is necessary to discuss Le Guin's choice of the agents—dragon-people—that support the hypothesis, including the Woman of Kemay, Tehanu and Irian.

To begin with, the exact existence of dragon-people affiliates dragons with humans. That is to say, the dragon-people are the connection, the bridge and the link between the two peoples that have separated long ago but used to be one. I would argue that the existence of dragon-people, though rare, is the living proof that demystifies the complicated symbol of dragons and clarifies its connotations by virtue of integrating humans and dragons into one. As a result, that the Earthsea dragons, being outnumbered by humans, are driven away to the barren lands in the farthest west could be regarded as a metaphor—the dragons symbolize all the minorities that are excluded to an inferior status in the hierarchical world where men are the center of things. Then it cannot be just a coincidence that these three dragon-people share one common feature—being female. Their gender is a significant clue to support my hypothesis. For one thing, the gender of the Earthsea dragons, according to Le Guin,

is left to be ambiguous on purpose (*Earthsea Revisioned* 24).²⁸ Then why does Le Guin choose to identify the gender of the dragon-people while leave that of the dragons unidentified? For another, the three gender-specific dragon-people, Irian and Tehanu in particular, are the only of the kind that have explicit characters in the Earthsea Cycle. Even though it is too simplistic to conclude that they represent all the dragon-people, let alone all the dragons, their significance cannot be denied.

Compared with Irian and Tehanu, the Woman of Kemay is a less vivid character. The readers are informed of limited clues about her—she is old, she is a fisherwoman on Gont and she is a dragon in human form. But how old is she? Does she have a family? What does she look like? Can she transform herself into a dragon? If she can, why does she stay in the Archipelago rather than fly to the west with her people? None of the above questions can be answered for Ogion’s tale does not give the details, not even her name. She is called the Woman of Kemay owing to the place of her residence. She is nameless and faceless, just like most female protagonists in the first trilogy.²⁹ Unlike the old fisherwoman, Tehanu’s clear-cut lineaments make her



²⁸ In *Wizard*, it is informed that a she-dragon gave birth to eight young dragons, left them to Yevaud on Pendor and then flew away to the West as all the she-dragons would do. (95) Even if it is implied that Yevaud is the father of the young dragons, the exact gender of Yevaud and its children is never revealed. In the third Earthsea book, when they arrived at a tower named “The Keep of Kalessin,” Arren asked Ged who Kalessin was and whether Kalessin was the dragon that built the tower, but Ged could only reply, “I don’t know. I don’t know if it was built. Nor how old he is. I say ‘he,’ but I do not even know that...” (*Shore* 198). In addition, the gender of the other dragon in *Shore*—Orm Embar—is also unidentified because Orm Embar, just like the other dragons, was mostly called by its own name, instead of a gender-specific pronoun. Le Guin claims, “the dragons defies gender entirely...[because] the deepest foundation of the order of oppression is gendering;” therefore, in order “to imagine freedom, the myths of gender...have to be exploded and discarded” (*Earthsea Revisioned* 24).

²⁹ Ged’s mother is the first women that is mentioned in the Earthsea Cycle, but she is not even a

too vivid a character that anyone “look[s] at once and quickly look[s] away from” (*Tehanu* 8). It is told at the beginning of *Tehanu* that the little girl, Therru, was abused and “pushed into the fire while it was burning” by her bioparents and their pals, who “wanted to hide what they’d done to her” (4). Although the child survived the fire, “the right side of the face and head and the right hand...had been charred to the bone” (5). The fire not only leaves dreadful scars on her body but also results in her deep trauma that it takes Tenar, her foster mother, plenty of time, patience and love to alleviate. But the pain, as well as the scars, cannot be erased even with Tenar’s infinite love, so *Tehanu* is still afraid of people and cannot easily trust any. Ironically, people are even more afraid of *Tehanu*; they try to ignore her existence as if her scars remind them of all their wrong doings and the dark side of humanity which they refuse to recognize. Similar to *Tehanu*, *Irian* has an awful childhood as well.

Because *Irian*’s mother died in childbirth, her suffering mainly comes from her father, who always vented his anger on his daughter after getting drunk. Fortunately, as the old saying goes, “Every cloud has a silver lining,” with little care from her parents,

character because “she died before he [Ged] was a year old” (*Wizard* 2) and consequently the description about this woman who gave birth to the future Archmage takes only a single sentence. Strictly speaking, the first female protagonist is Ged’s aunt—his mother’s sister and a witch. The witch discovered Ged’s talent and taught him all that she knew about wizardry. (*Wizard* 2-7) Even if she played a role in Ged’s childhood, the middle-aged Ged could not recall her name, which is simply replaced by “the witch of Ten Alders” (*Tehanu* 90). Same as the Woman of Kemay, Ged’s aunt is called so according to the custom of the village in which they lived—Ten Alders. In *The Tombs of Atuan*, there are more explicit female characters. However, the main protagonist, Tenar, was deprived of her name and became the Eaten One in order to serve “the Nameless Ones” at the beginning of the novel. (*Tombs* 1-7) Then, Tenar is totally gone in *The Farthest Shore* after she has accomplished great achievement in *Tombs*. Moreover, since *Shore* focuses on Ged and Arren’s journey, there is not really any impressive female protagonist in it. As a result, I argue that most women in the first trilogy are nameless or faceless.

Irian grew up sturdy and independent. Then, in order to get rid of her father and prove herself, Irian went to Roke School and intended to study there. Her request was rejected with an excuse that she might endanger the school's principles.

However, the truth is that Irian, like all the other women, was turned down and kept out by the wizardly school owing to her gender. To this point, it could be concluded that the three dragon-people are either neglected or, worse, rejected in the male-dominated wizardly world. For this reason, I would argue, the gender specification of the three dragon-people implies that the Earthsea dragons represent all the oppressed women—the nameless, the faceless, the suffered, and the rejected.

But the dragons are more than a trope for the oppressed women. Tehanu's multiple identities, in addition to being female, make her the most complicated protagonist among the three dragon-people and intensify the depth of the symbolic dragons—she is also on behalf of the deformed, the abused, and the children, all of them are thought to be of no consequence and thus are excluded from the center in the hierarchical world as the Other.

Le Guin writes in *Earthsea Revisioned* that the untamed dragons in the first trilogy, such as Yevaud and its children, symbolize “wilderness. What is *not owned*” by men (22). In other words, the dragons signify all that is made the Other; accordingly, their anger or hatred toward men stands for the protest against the

dominated from the bottom of the hierarchy. But who are the minorities that the dragons represent? Who are the small others that the capitalized Other includes? On the one hand, Le Guin introduces the three dragon-people in the second trilogy in order to answer the foregoing questions. The embodiments of the dragon-people—The Woman of Kemay, Tehanu and Irian—work together to clarify and concretize who the oppressed minorities are, such as the women, the elderly, the young, the abused, and the disabled. On the other hand, these three characters reinforce the connotations that the dragons carry and even bring the symbolic dragons up to another level. To be precise, the dragons in the second trilogy have evolved from a symbol of wilderness into that of “subversion, revolution, change—a going beyond the old order in which men were taught to own and dominate and women were taught to collude with them: the order of oppression” (*Earthsea Revisioned* 23-24). Hence, the dragons will play the most pivotal role in releasing Earthsea from the order of oppression and leading the world to an order of freedom. As Le Guin concludes in *Earthsea Revisioned*:

The dragon is the stranger, the other, the not-human: a wild spirit, dangerous, winged, which escapes and destroys the artificial order of oppression. The dragon is the familiar also, our own imagining, a speaking spirit, wise, winged, which imagines a new order of freedom.


The child who is our care, the child we have betrayed, is our guide. She leads us to the dragon. She is the dragon. (*Earthsea Revisioned* 25-26)

In other words, the wild dragons in the first trilogy are the symbol of the Other that escapes or are excluded from the wizardly hierarchy. Although they cause disturbances to the man-made hierarchy from time to time, they cannot do essential harm to it, let alone change its order. Yet the dragons in the second trilogy have evolved and are equipped with subversive capacity. The real changes start from Irian, who breaks into the wizardly authority and destroys its leader. Then Tehanu—the child who was raped, abused and burned by men—grows beyond men’s betrayal and becomes the Woman on Gont as the prophecy says. She leads the way to the dragons and proceeds with the destruction of the old order. With the help of the dragons, including Tehanu, Irian and Kalessin, the wall of stones, which symbolizes the last defense of the wizardly hierarchy, falls apart and a new era begins. What’s more, the unusual case of Tehanu proves that the dragons signify not just the stranger—the Other—but also the familiar—the repressed part of our humanity that craves for freedom, such as sexuality. Precisely speaking, Therru has “been ungendered by the rape that destroys her ‘virtue’ and the mutilation that destroys her beauty;” as a result, “[s]he has nothing left of the girl men want girls to be” (*Earthsea Revisioned* 24). That is to say, the fire has not simply destroyed her appearance but

also burned away her sexuality. Thus, I would argue, Therru's lack of sexuality represents that part of humanity has been twisted, repressed or eliminated by men, which is very common in the patriarchal hierarchy. In order to secure its hegemony, the male-dominated culture has done all "the necessary evil" to constrain the free development of our humanity.

Therru's scars and her most painful sufferings, in this sense, symbolize the consequences of those evil doings that cannot be effaced even by the infinite love. Consequently, the metamorphosis that Tehanu goes through in the end of *The Other*

Wind features largely:



She reached up her arms. Fire ran along her hands, her arms, into her hair, into her face and body, flamed up into great wings above her head, and lifted her into the air, a creature all fire, blazing, beautiful. She cried out aloud, a clear, wordless cry. She flew high, headlong, fast, up into the sky where the light was growing and a white wind had erased the unmeaning stars. (204)

According to Sandra J. Lindow, Tehanu's transformation represents "a release from the awful bondage of her damaged flesh" (41), that is, the recovery of her wholeness. It is truly a significant scene that Tehanu gets rid of all her scars in the transformation and becomes a beautiful dragon with splendid mail and wings of gold, like a butterfly

hatches out of its cocoon. After she is freed from her damaged flesh, she flies high into the sky—freely. Besides, her originally hoarse voice undergoes a radical change, too—the clear and loud cry from the dragon Tehanu enunciates the ultimate joy of freedom. Tehanu’s metamorphosis signifies a metaphoric process that transcends all the ineradicable sufferings that men have caused and the Other have endured. In this regard, the symbolic transcendence could be deemed as a reconciliation between the dominated and the Other, through which all men’s evil doings have been, though not forgotten, forgiven and the twisted humanity is restored.

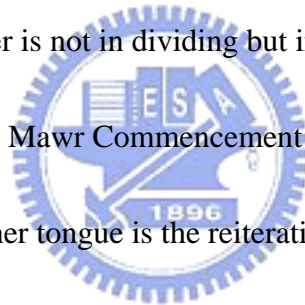
Even though the dragons fly on the other wind to the other side of the world at last, what the dragons represent does not fade away with the wind. As the Kargish Princess, Sesarakh,³⁰ says to King Lebannen, “Sons, yours sons, let them to be dragons and kings of dragons” (*Wind* 174); the spirits of the Earthsea dragons will remain alive in King Lebannen and his offspring because, as one critic claims, “Lebannen and Sesarakh internalize the dragons’ otherness” (Hollindale 193). The internalization of the otherness is not equal to assimilation, though. On the contrary, it is to include the others, maintain the diversities and bring forth a democratic order.

³⁰ In order to seek peace and equality between the Hardic and the Kargish, Princess Sesarakh is sent to King Lebannen as a gift by her father, the Kargish Emperor, who hopes to lift up the status of the Kargad Lands in the Archipelagos through the union of his daughter and the Hardic King. At first, the princess and the young king have such strong prejudice against each other that it seems unlikely to expect a marriage of theirs. However, communication dissolves the cultural barriers and mutual understanding leads to admiration. So Lebannen and Sesarakh walk down the aisle and conclude a peaceful treaty in the end of *Wind*. (*Wind* 55-65, 135-39, 161-74, 207-10)

Then, here comes another question: What are Le Guin’s expectations for Earthsea’s new order of freedom?

Unlike the old order of oppression in which Men talk all the time and do not listen, the new order of freedom welcomes real conversation that everyone can participate in—that is, the mother tongue, as Le Guin terms it:

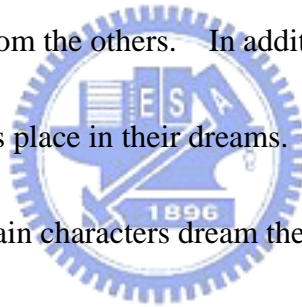
The mother tongue...expects an answer. It is conversation....The mother tongue is language not as mere communication but as relation, relationships. It connects. It goes two ways, many ways, an exchange, a network. Its power is not in dividing but in binding, not in distancing but in uniting. (“Bryn Mawr Commencement Address” 149)



The best exemplar of the mother tongue is the reiteration of the ancient tale that humans and dragons share the same roots. At first, the tale is crystallized through Ogion’s story about the Woman of Kemay in *Tehanu* (10-16). Subsequently in “Dragonfly,” Master Namer indicates that the shared history of men and dragons is vaguely recorded in an old Pelnish scroll found in Roke’s library while Master Patterner claims that he heard about a similar Kargish tale in his homeland (*Tales* 240-41). Finally, more people take part in the restoration of the ancient history in *The Other Wind*, including a sailors’ song called “The Lass of Belilo” (86)³¹, a

³¹ “The Lass of Belino” is told by Captain Tosla, King Lebannen’s trustworthy friend. It is a sailors’ song that “tells how a sailor left a pretty girl weeping in every port, until one of the pretty girls flew

Kargish legend about dragons told by Princess Seserakh (103-06), Irian’s speech that reveals Kalessin’s understanding of the history (128-31), and a story about “Verw nadan” from the Pelnish wizard, Onyx (192-96). The tale itself is like a jigsaw puzzle and the accounts from these narrators are the pieces, with all of which the genuine tale can be pieced together and become complete again. More importantly, these accounts are voiced in diverse perspectives and thus with different focuses from the originally silent Other, such as the Kargish and the women.³² That is to say, the reiteration of the tale is a conversation that helps readers understand various non-mainstream viewpoints from the others. In addition, the conversation among the protagonists in *Wind* also takes place in their dreams. At the beginning of the last chapter “Rejoining,” all the main characters dream their own dreams (175-79). As Mike Cadden observes, “The dreams, individually and collectively, are short glimpses of the different experiences that these people from different cultures...have had...” (103). Although the dreams are respectively independent, they connect each other and are weaved into a common message that suggests them tearing down the wall of stones in order to restore the world’s balance. The characters are indeed inspired and



after his boat on wings of brass and snatched him out of it and ate him” (*Wind* 86).

³² Ogion’s story is told by the middle-aged Tenar, who has been away from the center of the wizardly world. The Namer and the Patterner, compared with Thorion, have less influence on Roke School—the wizardly authority. In addition, Princess Seserakh speaks for the Kargish, who are outnumbered by and thus mostly subject to the Hardic. As for Irian, she stands for all the dragons—the symbol of the Other in the Earthsea Cycle. Finally, the Pelnish wizards, take Onyx for example, are made notorious in the wizardly hierarchy, so Pelnish knowledge is thought to be insignificant and usually neglected. Because all the story-tellers are of an inferior status in the hierarchy, I would argue that they are all the spokespeople of the minorities.

then work together with one heart to complete the mission after their dreams. In other words, these dreams rejoin the differences caused by various backgrounds and form a network in which voices are heard, accepted and then merged into a shared goal that aims at the welfare of all people, instead of that of a specific group. This is exactly why there must be conversation because “[t]ruth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person; it is born between people collectively searching for the truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (Bakhtin 110).

Without conversation, there will be just one voice—the father tongue—that pretends to talk about the truth but actually serves and empowers men alone and excludes the others. Therefore, a democratic order, that is an order of freedom, can only evolve from conversation that bridges all kinds of relationships—the mother tongue.

Furthermore, Le Guin makes it explicit that the new Earthsea society, with both the king’s government and the council, is not totalitarian but democratic (*Wind* 115-17).

The council members consist of men and women coming from all parts of Earthsea and various walks of life, such as merchants, shippers and even miners. All major decisions in regards to the kingdom and its people must be approved and then enacted with the consent of the majority of the council. Even if the king has influence on the council, the council is definitely not his “pets and puppets” because Lebannen mostly just listens, “express[es] no opinion and let[s] the council make the decision” (116).

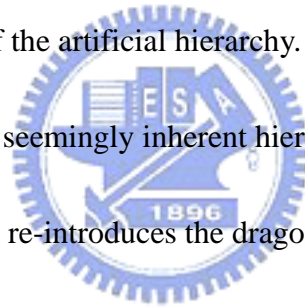
In brief, the council is the place where Le Guin's notion about conversation, the mother tongue, is fully realized. Based on these descriptions, Le Guin has implied what a democratic society is like and how it works in her mind. For this, I would argue that the new Earthsea is founded upon not only the leadership of an open-minded king who respects and treats everyone equally but also on that of a democratic council that includes and accepts diversities among all, which will lead Earthsea to the beginning of a democratic order, that is, an order of freedom.

To conclude, the aim of the thesis is to delve into the shifts between the first and the second trilogy in the Earthsea Cycle for these shifts can best manifest Le Guin's feminist transformation and her attempt to re-place power in the fictional world.

After the first trilogy was published between 1968 and 1972, Le Guin has gradually noticed that the wizardly world is highly hierarchical, patriarchal and thus full of injustice. Earthsea is imprisoned in a dualistic trap that over-simplistically divides its people into two—the superior and the inferior. To be more precise, it is Men that are on the top of the hierarchy, dominate the world and exclude the Other, such as most women, the old, the young, and the deformed. In order to remove the injustice and restore true balance to Earthsea, Le Guin started to work on the second trilogy.

As it says in "Dragonfly," "Injustice makes the rules, and courage breaks them" (*Tales* 201). The second trilogy, which can be regarded as the revision of the first trilogy,

took her almost three decades and enormous courage to finish. Unlike the first three books that place masculine principles above all, the second trilogy does not focus on hero tales any longer. First of all, Le Guin presents the life of the middle-aged Tenar and her way of seeing the world in *Tehanu*. Since the first three books mostly center on male perspectives, it is a breakthrough to take a female perspective, through which the wizardly world looks very different. Thanks to Tenar's viewpoints, readers begin to be suspicious of the legitimacy of the wizardly hierarchy in Earthsea. Then in *Tales from Earthsea*, Le Guin allows the readers glimpses into Earthsea's early history and unfolds the irrationality of the artificial hierarchy. With these significant information from the past, the seemingly inherent hierarchy is deconstructed and then falls apart. Besides, Le Guin re-introduces the dragons in the second trilogy and lets the dragons be our guide. These Earthsea dragons are empowered with further symbolic meanings—they are not only a trope for the wilderness but also the subversive force coming from the Other. With the help of the dragons, the Earthsea world successfully gets rid of the dualistic trap and is transformed from a hierarchical society to a democratic one in which every individual deserves the same respect and all voices are carefully listened to. In the new Earthsea, the wizardly power has been replaced by the secular power. That is to say, power is no longer appropriated by a specific group of the privileged wizards; on the contrary, every single being has the



right to take part in the shaping of the world. To this point, Le Guin has re-placed power and distributed it among all Earthsea people as equally as possible. Even though *The Other Wind* might be the last piece to the Earthsea Cycle, this is not the end of everything. Earthsea should be regarded as the microcosm of our world; hence, Le Guin's modifications to the fictional world are actually her reflection on reality. Just like Earthsea, whose democratic order has just begun, Le Guin expects that the real world is going toward an order of freedom as well. This is how she, as an author, tries to turn our world into a better place—by means of words. And as long as Earthsea remains alive in the minds of the author and the readers, there will always be attempts being made to lead our world to a truly democratic order.



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