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Holding out one's hand in the dark: The theme of touching in selected works of Ursula K Leguin

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HOLDING OUT ONE'S HAND IN THE DARK: THE THEME OF TOUCHING IN SELECTED WORKS OF URSULA K. LEGUIN

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TO MIKE

Who never lost his sense of humor--or mine

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CHAPTER 1

Until very recently, speculative fiction, or science fiction, has been virtually ignored by literary scholars. Science fiction was and still is, to some extent, considered popular fiction, and popular fiction has never received much critical attention. Unfortunately, this generalization excludes good works of popular fiction from study and criticism. Authors who have managed to cross over and receive critical consideration are rare. One such "crossover" author is Ursula K. LeGuin. But even LeGuin's work has been neglected outside of specialty journals such as Science Fiction Studies and Extrapolation. Little criticism of her fine novels and short stories appears in the more prestigious literary publications.

But LeGuin has picked her literary medium carefully. She sees the division between "art" and "entertainment" as superfluous; instead they should be one and the same: "That's all art wants to do. It wants to get to you. To break down the walls between us, for a moment. To bring us together in a celebration, a ceremony, an entertainment--a mutual affirmation of understanding, or of suffering, or of joy. Therefore I totally oppose the notion that you can put Art over here on a pedestal, and Entertainment down here in a clown suit. Art and Entertainment are the same thing, in that the more deeply and genuinely entertaining a work is, the better art it is."[1] Speculative fiction offers possibilities not available in mainstream fiction: as Peter

Olander points out, "For LeGuin, science fiction represents an 'open system' where the potential for thinking about ideas and patterns exists relatively unfettered by imposed or inherited systems of society and thought."[2] By positing the problems encountered and solutions attempted in the future, LeGuin can effectively criticize contemporary society without negating her fundamental optimism over what human beings can accomplish. As LeGuin herself explains, "The fantasist, whether he used the ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the younger ones of science and technology, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist--and a good deal more directly--about human life as it is lived, as it might be lived, and as it ought to be lived."[3] But, most importantly, the themes LeGuin deftly explores in her work are universal--so literally universal that she uses other worlds and individuals from those worlds to add dramatic emphasis to her points. Her attention to characterization and to the real dilemmas facing human beings no matter the setting or time transcends her medium and places her work in the realm of art.

More specifically, the themes LeGuin repeatedly develops in her novels and short stories concern the relationship of the individual to the other, the isolation of the individual in a world of others, the need of the individual to reach out to others, and the need of the individual to find love. In other words, the one major theme of her work is communication--the profound need of the individual to communicate. The LeGuin protagonist, acutely sensitive, intimately knows the pain of the outsider, and knowing this pain, he is profoundly moved to see that this pain be reduced or eliminated for all. And the means for

this breakthrough is communication. Through communication, the threat of the other diminishes. Communication as a means to understanding is of vital importance in LeGuin's metaphysics. And for LeGuin, the evolution of communication into understanding is accomplished through "touching":

> And all this, the seeing, hearing, speaking, thinking, feeling--all this we do one by one. The great mystics have gone deeper than community and sensed identity, the identity of all; but we ordinary souls cannot do that, or only for a moment, maybe one moment in a lifetime. One by one we live, soul by soul. The person, the single person. Community is the best we can hope for, and community for most people means touch: the touch of your hand against the other's hand, the job done together, the sledge hauled together, the dance danced together, the child conceived together. We have only one body apiece, and two hands. We can form a circle, but we cannot be a circle.[4]

What begins as individual touching individual can evolve into community touching community, world touching world. In order to understand the self, the sensitive, thinking LeGuin hero must understand and relate to others, and LeGuin returns to this theme time and again.

Various critics have assumed the theme of touching, or communication, in LeGuin's works, but none have adequately developed it. Thomas Remington, however, comes closest in his two essays "A Touch of Love, a Touch of Difference" and "The Other Side of Suffering: Touch

as Theme and Metaphor in LeGuin's Science Fiction Novels." Both essays emphasize the importance of the concept in LeGuin's work, but neither fully develops the expanse of this unifying theme. The purpose of this study is to examine the development and growth of this theme and to examine the growth and increasing depth of LeGuin's understanding and portrayal of it as well.

To demonstrate LeGuin's concept of touching as the central theme to her works, I will use one of her short stories, "Nine Lives," and two of her novels, The Left Hand of Darkness and The Dispossessed. In "Nine Lives," LeGuin presents a startling characterization to explore the strangeness of the other--a ten-clone. The ten-clone arrives on a lonely mining planet populated only by two engineers. The clone-brothers and -sisters together provide total physical, social, and emotional support for each other, and the two non-clones find themselves excluded from this support. But after an accident, the single surviving clone learns that to survive, both physically and emotionally, he must touch others. This need to touch is further explored in The Left Hand of Darkness. Genly Ai, the envoy from a politically utopian federation of worlds, comes to the planet, Gethen, to obtain its cooperation with the federation. Alone on a planet of androgynes who are completely unaware of the existence of other worlds, Genly is truly the strangest of strangers. Since he has difficulty overcoming his own view of the Gethenians as other, he cannot accomplish his mission to get this world to touch other worlds until he himself has touched and has been touched. By realizing Estraven as his ally, he learns about the planet as a whole, about the individuals on that

planet, and even about himself. Similarly, in The Dispossessed, Shevek's separateness or "otherness" drives him to "unbuild walls," to break down barriers obstructing communication. As in Genly's case, the first walls to be broken down are within himself. LeGuin pursues the dialectical development of her physicist-protagonist to demonstrate the necessity for touching in maintaining the health and balance of the individual, the community, and the world.

The concept of the other is fundamental in LeGuin's writing. Each of her protagonists experiences the frustration and pain in being the stranger, the outsider. LeGuin states the problem: "The question involved here is the question of The Other--the being who is different from yourself. This being can be different from you in its sex; or in its annual income; or in its way of speaking and dressing and doing things; or in the color of its skin, or the number of its legs and heads. In other words, there is the sexual Alien, and the social Alien, and the cultural Alien, and finally the racial Alien."[5] The concept, however, is not new as Simone de Beauvoir explains in The Second Sex: "The category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. In the most primordial societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality--that of the Self and the Other. . . . Thus it is that no group ever sets itself up as the One without at once setting up the Other over against itself. . . . [We] find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed--he sets himself up as the essential as opposed to the Other, the inessential, the object."[6] Therefore, the nature of human beings is

to perceive those outside themselves or their sources of identity (i.e., sex, occupation, church, and so on) as threatening and suspect. LeGuin's point, however, is that the essential purpose of each civilized, thinking person is to eliminate such categorization from his or her consciousness.

Therefore, the needs and problems of the individual are integral to this common theme. The individual undergoes continual struggle to overcome isolation. Being physically, intellectually, or spiritually isolated from one's fellows is living hell: "We're each of us alone, to be sure. What can you do but hold your hand out in the dark?"[7] In other words, one has nothing if he cannot at least attempt to reach out to another. But the strangeness of others threatens the individual; he fears that others may scorn him, humiliate him, ignore him, laugh at him, hurt him. All fear the unknown, and the other's response to one's overtures are unknown. The individual, therefore, experiences ambivalence over his decision to touch and allow his fears to build walls and isolate--just as in The Left Hand of Darkness the Karhidish king cuts off communication with Genly because he fears the extreme "otherness" of the envoy and fears the unknown consequences of his offer. But choosing not to touch hurts the individual; building walls removes him from valuable contact and experience--and in some cases could and does have tragic consequences. Kaph must touch to find reason for living; Genly must touch to accomplish his mission; Shevek must touch to continue his intellectual and spiritual growth. The thinking, caring, responsible person must reach out, and not reaching out, not holding his hand out in the dark, violates his integrity and

intelligence.

In her work, LeGuin explores the strangeness and the threat of the other. In her eyes, the individual and his society waste far too much energy building defenses against this threat when such effort is unnecessary and, ultimately, harmful. Too many walls have been built; too many times communication has been blocked. And building these walls promises to be dangerous because only the free flow of effective communication between individuals, families, societies, and worlds can insure safety and survival. According to LeGuin, the quality of human life can achieve utopian heights if people will embrace rather than reject the other--both in strangers and within themselves. And the protagonists of "Nine Lives," The Left Hand of Darkness, and The Dispossessed manage to do just that; they tear down their own walls of prejudice and open themselves to higher planes of human experience. Alone, they can do little. But when a whole world of individuals achieves such self-consciousness and can recognize the waste inherent in divisiveness, utopia becomes a possibility--a romantic prospect, but a moving one. So "unbuilding walls" is the first step; "touching" is the final step; forming the circle, achieving understanding, and maintaining balance are the goals. In these three works, LeGuin beautifully demonstrates touching as her central theme--why touching should be attempted, what damage its absence can bring, and what it can ultimately achieve. Touching symbolizes LeGuin's optimism and warning for the present world and its future.

CHAPTER 2

In "Nine Lives," LeGuin proves her skill as a short story writer while exploring the human being's profound need for significant others. In order to fill that need, however, the individual must continually fear and face rejection from the others to whom he reaches out. But LeGuin insists upon the necessity of overcoming that fear and upon the rewards such a victory can bring about--internal rewards, but rewards nonetheless. She carefully weaves setting, a forbidding, scarcely habitable planet, with characterization, two men and a ten-clone, to develop her theme that the elimination of fears and prejudices toward the stranger results in a union of minds that is both beautiful and essential.

The setting of the story is an isolated mining post on the planet Libra. Libra's value lies in her wealth of mineable minerals. No natives or colonists inhabit the planet--only the two lonely miners. The setting, therefore, is important in establishing the story's theme of isolation and the efforts the individual is compelled to make in order to overcome it.

Owen Pugh and Alvaro Martin, the two miners, have been stationed on Libra for two years, and for the past year, they have been that planet's sole residents. Pugh and Martin anticipate the imminent arrival of replacements with a mixture of relief and dread: They look forward to new faces and voices but fear the effort involved in meeting those

new faces. And their fears are realized when their relief team turns out to be a ten-clone. Totally self-sufficient for social and emotional needs, the clone-members bursts in on the two men's formerly quiet duty and exclude them without considering or even being able to comprehend that such exclusion exists, matters, or hurts. Only after the deaths of all but one of the ten clone-brothers and -sisters does Kaph, the survivor, comprehend the anguish of isolation--especially after such a great loss. At first, the loss is too overwhelming, and the effort to replace the significant others in his life appears too great to attempt as well. But Pugh's desperate efforts to rescue Martin during an earthquake--going against standard operating procedure--awaken Kaph to the fact that "singletons" can feel the same way about each other as he did about his nine brothers and sisters. Also he realizes that in the event of Pugh and Martin's deaths, he would indeed be totally alone. After questioning Pugh more closely about his feelings for Martin and confirming his epiphany, Kaph begins making his first efforts to reach out and touch again.

Although the latter half of the story centers on Kaph's struggle to realize and fill the intense emotional gap left by the deaths of his brothers and sisters, the third person omniscient observer focuses more on Pugh. The reader sees the arrival of the ten-clone, the accidental deaths, and the desperate necessity of rescuing Martin through Pugh's eyes. Interestingly, LeGuin does not give the reader any glimpses into the mind of the surviving clone. But the suspense of the story rests on whether or not Kaph can recover and thrive in a world where empathetic brothers and sisters are not givens and where one

must establish relationships always with the risk of pain or betrayal. Excluding the reader from Kaph's inner metamorphosis from clone to human being preserves the suspense and provides a satisfactory resolution to the story and theme.

The dread of the stranger, the fear of rejection, and the difficulty of first meetings are real problems to be conquered in LeGuin's cosmos. Pugh and Martin eagerly await the arrival of their relief team after one year of each other's exclusive company. But after that year of isolation, the two men dread and fear the possibility of rejection: "It is hard to meet a stranger. Even the greatest extrovert meeting even the meekest stranger knows a certain dread, though he may not know he knows it. Will he make a fool of me wreck my image of myself invade me destroy me change me? Will he be different from me? Yes, that he will. There's the terrible thing: the strangeness of the stranger!"[1] And when the replacements disembark from their landing craft, Pugh and Martin confront the ultimate stranger--a ten-clone--ten beautiful, identical parts to one self. Thomas Remington points out, "In 'Nine Lives,' the isolated planet and the clone--fairly standard sf elements--are not used because they are 'typically right' or because they help identify the story as 'the right stuff' to the sf audience, but because they are ideally suited to reenforce the theme of the self and the other which is at the story's focus."[2] The ten-clone provides a challenge in successful characterization for LeGuin as well as being a supremely threatening other to her other characters.

The two men soon learn that the extended companionship for which they had hoped is impossible with the clone-brothers and -sisters. The

ten have been raised and trained together, and their efficient communication with each other is awesome because of their instantaneous empathy and understanding. Also because communication among the ten is so efficient, they make little effort beyond courtesy and information-gathering to include the two miners. They do not, however, exclude Pugh and Martin because they are intentionally inconsiderate but because they do not comprehend the needs of "singletons." Indeed, their every need--from emotional to sexual to professional--can be met by the other nine. But almost every action of the ten-clone emphasizes the apartness of the two outsiders. In their cramped living quarters, Pugh and Martin soon become aware of intimacies shared among the clone which the two will never be invited to share. Even the physical appearance of the brothers and sisters stresses the difference between clone and non-clone: The ten have beautiful Asian features with bodies in perfect condition. Even their voices sound alike. LeGuin carefully refrains from developing the individual characters that make up the ten-clone. She wants them to come across to the reader as virtually indistinguishable from each other--one person with ten bodies and voices. Pugh, contemplating his own glaringly pale, puny frame, wonders bitterly, "What would it be like, then, to have someone as close to you as that? Always to be answered when you spoke, never to be in pain alone. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. . . .That hard old problem was solved. The neighbor was the self: the love was perfect" (NL, p. 391). But the love is perfect only as long as one is on the inside of such a relationship, not the outside. Soon Pugh and Martin begin to use the latter's first language, Argentinian, to do some

excluding of their own. The two outsiders still find themselves becoming increasingly irritable with the ten-clone and with each other, however, until the mining accident which takes nine of the clones' lives. At this point, Kaph, the only clone who survives, experiences isolation to a dramatic and tragic degree; only one part remains of the ten parts that once made the whole.

Isolation is the most serious malaise that can befall a LeGuin protagonist. When the ten-clone brothers and sisters are trapped, injured, and dying in the collapsed mine, Kaph, although trying to save one of his sisters, makes no effort to communicate with Pugh or Martin for aid: "'They looked to one another for help,'" explains Pugh (NL, p. 398). Furthermore, Kaph has no desire to live without the companionship of the other nine. Indeed, before regaining consciousness, he symbolically dies nine times the deaths of his lost brothers and sisters. After regaining consciousness, he says only, "I am nine-tenths dead. There is not enough of me left alive" (NL, p. 399). Martin believes Kaph to be "spla," or crazy, but Pugh understands that the survivor cannot deal with the loss of the people who truly knew his needs and feelings as they knew their own. Martin fears and is even irritated by Kaph's profound grief. Little things, like Kaph never saying good night, annoy him. But Pugh realizes, "He doesn't see us or hear us, that's the truth. He never had to see anyone else before. He never was alone before. He had himself to see, talk with, live with, nine other selves all his life. He doesn't know how you go it alone. He must learn. Give him time" (NL, p. 399). Pugh theorizes that Kaph's nine clone-brothers and sisters were like nine selves, and

no one could have anyone more understanding and caring than oneself. Pugh also believes that, with time, Kaph can learn that his emotional desolation need not necessarily be permanent.

The threat of isolation, however, confronts Pugh as well. One day near the end of their duty on Libra, Pugh and Kaph are working at their homebase while Martin is out taking a last look at the "Trench," the planet's main geological fault. An earthquake interrupts activities in the dome, and Pugh realizes the danger his friend is in. Without regard to proper procedure or his own safety, Pugh flies to Martin's rescue. Kaph briefly tries to talk him out of going but without success. The thought that his sole companion, the person closest to being his symbolic clone, could die and leave him alone removes any care for his own safety or for more cautious plans of action. After Pugh has brought Martin back to their shelter, he realizes his rescue mission was foolhardy and premature. Interestingly, Pugh's attempt to save Martin parallels Kaph's attempt to save at least one of his fellow clones. Kaph rushed into the collapsing mine without regard for himself when he could have saved himself. In the same manner, Pugh rushed out to find Martin during an earthquake in a vehicle unsafe for travel under those conditions. He went against recommended procedure and against Kaph's advice. The intimacy of his relationship with Martin and his need for that continued intimacy superseded all fear or procedure. The latter rescue's main importance, however, lies in its profound effect on Kaph.

During and after the rescue, Kaph finally realizes the existence of Pugh and Martin as significant others. As Pugh had predicted, the

clone needed time, patience, and understanding. After Pugh's quick exit to rescue Martin, Kaph waits in the dome. He is completely alone for the first time since the loss of his brothers and sisters, for either Pugh or Martin had stayed with him constantly to prevent a suicide attempt. When Martin's distress signal came through, Kaph tries to patch it through to Pugh but discovers he is cut off from communication with both men. Kaph notices the silence and plays music to fill it, but when the tape ends, the silence returns. Then he notices Pugh's hanging uniform--the first time he has fully realized the presence of either of his dome-mates, and by realizing their absence, Kaph realizes their presence, their existence. After their safe return, Kaph makes his move toward understanding by asking Pugh if he loves Martin. Pugh is defensive at first, but he soon admits that, yes, he does love his partner, and he explains, "We're each of us alone, to be sure. What can you do but hold your hand out in the dark" (NL, p. 406). At this point, Kaph reveals that their replacement team arriving the next morning is a twelve-clone. Pugh appreciates what an ordeal it would be for Kaph to remain on the planet with the new clone after his loss, and he suggests that Kaph accompany them to their next outpost. Pugh's offer sparks Kaph's revelation: "Kaph looked at him and saw the thing he had never seen before: saw him: Owen Pugh, the other, the stranger who held out his hand in the dark" (NL, p. 406). Pugh is too tired to appreciate the significance of this moment, and he is asleep before he can hear Kaph say good night. This small courtesy is significant in that Kaph had never before participated in the other men's nightly ritual. Such a ritual had been unnecessary

for and never even considered by the ten-clone. Pugh explained to Martin that the clones' "discourtesy" was unintentional, for one never says good night to oneself. Only after Kaph overcomes his grief for his brothers and sisters and realizes his need for human companionship and love can he respond to Pugh's patience and understanding. Although he will undoubtedly experience the pain involved with any significant bond, he now knows that the beauty of what he shared with his brothers and sisters can be approached and, perhaps, replaced. He can, at last, touch and be touched.

In "Nine Lives," Kaph metamorphoses from the undifferentiated part of a matched set into an individual who is still frightened (as LeGuin says all are) but who can now reach out to grasp that hand that may be waiting in the dark. Pugh acts as the catalyst for that change. Pugh emerges as a remarkable and wise character who is able to conquer his own fear, impatience, and prejudice because of his over-riding love and respect for others. He quells his fear of the stranger and, in doing so, helps that stranger develop as a person and learn to love more than himself, or, in this story, his "selves." Although Kaph undergoes the greatest change, Pugh stands as the hero of "Nine Lives," and touching, breaking down barriers, stands as the beautifully developed theme.

CHAPTER 3

The Left Hand of Darkness furthers LeGuin's theme of the isolation of the individual and his overcoming of that isolation.[1] Genly Ai, the envoy from the utopian political entity called the Ekumen, seeks to join the planet Gethen (or Winter as it is called off-planet) with the federation of planets within the Ekumen. When Genly first arrives on Gethen, his impatience and naivete interfere with his effectiveness as an ambassador from "outer space" and cause him to misinterpret true and false offers of aid and friendship. His isolation ends when he understands that Estraven is the one who truly believes in his mission and is the only one who truly believes in the envoy himself. Together, they accomplish what, alone, Genly could not; they touch and, in doing so, bring together worlds to touch as well.

Again, as in "Nine Lives," setting is important in reinforcing the author's theme. Gethen's winter is extraordinarily cold. During the winter, travel becomes virtually impossible, which keeps towns and communities and families isolated from one another until the spring thaw. Furthermore, two nations divide Gethen: Karhide and Orgoreyn. Genly's first exposure to Gethen is in Karhide. Hundreds of domains and "hearths," or clans, make up Karhide's power-structure. These small populations are represented by lords, and they are the country's power base--not the king. As a result, bureaucracy and governmental control are kept to a minimum. In Orgoreyn, on the other hand, the

government rules all. Every citizen has identification papers, and those papers are checked fifty-two times daily. No unity exists between the two nations; furthermore, boundary disputes make war, never before waged on Gethen, a horrible possibility: "The familiar LeGuin scheme reveals itself in that there is never in this world any actual unity--governmental, cultural or any other. The planet world is always presented as a conglomerate of two or more cultures, sometimes merely co-existing, sometimes almost inimical. Genuine unity invariably turns out to be the goal toward which the events of the narrative proceed; it is always--to come."[2] Between these two countries comes Genly Ai to prevent further schism and to promote that illusive unity. Ostensibly, the envoy's mission is to join the world of Gethen with the league of worlds in the Ekumen, but he soon learns he can only achieve unity on the interplanetary level by achieving unity on an individual level. He must trust, be trusted by, and touch one other before he can trust, be trusted by, and touch a whole world of others.

Although the most obvious theme of The Left Hand of Darkness is Genly Ai's struggle to unite Gethen with the Ekumen, the crux of the novel is the development of Genly's relationship with Therem Harth rem ir Estraven, the Karhidish king's prime minister at the beginning of the story. Genly, however, does not learn to trust Estraven until the middle of the novel. One reason Genly has difficulty is that Estraven, like all Karhidish, is bound by "shifgrethor," a complex code of conduct, communication, and courtesy. Another reason is that Estraven, like all Karhidish, is androgynous--he is simultaneously man and woman. Estraven sacrifices his own position of power in the Karhidish government

by supporting the envoy's mission to the king. Consequently, he must escape to Orgoreyn for safety. Meanwhile, Genly believes the Karhidish radio reports which proclaim Estraven a traitor and obliviously continues his efforts in Karhide. Eventually, he visits Orgoreyn, the ultimate police state, where he again meets Estraven. Again, Estraven warns him that he is not safe, but Genly Ai refuses to heed the warning. Estraven's fears are realized when the Orgoreyn government arrests Genly and sentences him to a labor camp in that country's equivalent of Siberia. Once more Estraven makes a noble sacrifice and rescues the perishing envoy from the camp and sure death. Only now does Genly understand the extent of Estraven's belief and trust in him and his mission. Together, they flee Orgoreyn to return to Karhide in a dramatic escape across the Ice, an uninhabited, deathly cold region of the planet. Back in Karhide, Genly contacts his ship waiting in orbit, and his success is virtually assured, but only after one more sacrifice from Estraven: Genly's true friend is killed attempting to escape once more into Orgoreyn.

In this novel, LeGuin alternates two points of view. Genly Ai narrates the majority of the book so that much about Gethen and its people is learned through the eyes of this stranger. The envoy's changing opinions of the planet and its people reflect his personal growth and integration into the community. Selections from Estraven's journal provide a view of the stranger himself; however, Genly made the selections. Still, the main characters are both observer of the other. Furthermore, Genly Ai explains, "The story is not all mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed I am not sure whose story it is; you can

judge better. But it is all one, and if at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then you can choose the fact you like best; yet none of them are false, and it is all one story."[3] Two points of view not only provide two views of the characters but also of the story itself.

Also in this novel, the author reveals most overtly her fascination with various aspects of mysticism. One strong influence may be traceable to Martin Buber's I and Thou. According to Buber, a person may experience one of two relationships: I-It and I-Thou. In the I-It relationship, the "I" perceives the other person as object, as something different and alien; however, in the I-Thou relationship, the "I" perceives the other person as equal, as related and similar. The I-Thou relationship is rare, profound, and special: "The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being. The primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being."[4] In fact, Buber felt that the I-Thou relationship is attainable only between a person and God and that it is virtually impossible between two human beings. LeGuin, on the other hand, feels such a relationship is possible and should be the goal in each encounter, and she demonstrates the slow, painful reaching of that goal in the ultimate friendship of Genly Ai and Estraven. (Robert Scholes in his essay "The Good Witch of the West" goes so far as to see the names Ai and Therem as loose homonyms of I and Thou.)[5] To LeGuin, many of society's problems result from man, the most powerful, perceiving his world and those in it as "It," thus denying the possibility of unity; in The Left Hand of Darkness, she attempts to amend that denial.

Another overt influence on this novel is the Eastern philosophy of Taoism. The Taoist sees nature as a balance of Yin, the Female element symbolized by cold, dark, passivity, reason, and Yang, the Masculine element symbolized by heat, light, aggression, emotion. Yin and Yang exist both within the world and within the individual. The two must remain balanced for the maintenance of the natural order of the world and the natural health of the individual. In her essay "Is Gender Necessary?," LeGuin explains, "Our curse is alienation, the separation of Yang from Yin. Instead of a search for balance and integration, there is a struggle for dominance. Divisions are insisted upon, interdependence is denied."[6] Mankind (and LeGuin would emphasize "man") has exalted the Yang and denigrated the Yin. Again, LeGuin attempts to right this "wrong" and restore the balance in her fiction. Barbara J. Bucknall points out, ". . .The androgyne represents the Yang and Yin once more in accord."[7] In other words, the androgyne has the potential to achieve LeGuin's sought for balance and integration. However, N. B. Hayles observes, "Although the alien [within oneself] remains the other, once its otherness is admitted and understood, it can come into creative tension with the self and from this tension a new wholeness can emerge."[8] Yet the potential does not necessarily determine the act. The powerful of both Karhide and Orgoreyn are allowing aggression to overwhelm passivity, and war is the inevitable result. Estraven, however, is the ideal of balance. Much like Shevek of The Dispossessed, he is acutely self-aware and considers his actions, motives, and responsibilities in all matters. When he sees the destructive consequences his country is approaching, he acts. He helps Genly

Ai not because he pities the alien, but because by forcing his people to look outward, to touch other worlds, to join the Ekumen, he may force them to touch each other and to restore their balance. Lines from a Gethenian poem recur in the novel: "Light is the left hand of darkness/ and darkness the right hand of light./ Two are one. . ." (LHD, p. 222). Light and dark, Yin and Yang, are not to be separated without harm. LeGuin strives to show in her fiction that through separation of the two lies unnecessary discord; through balance lies harmony. In order to touch others, one must be neither too aggressive nor too passive; neither element of Yang nor Yin must overrule the other, or one's role in relationships will be either master or slave--never equal.

Again the plot of the story focuses on the threat and fear of the stranger. In this case, the obvious stranger is Genly Ai, the representative of the Ekumen. Although he is not the first alien to observe the culture of Gethen (an Ekumen reconnaisance team had previously visited undetected), he is the first of whom the natives are aware. On Gethen, Genly is the object of much wonder and skepticism because before his arrival the inhabitants were unaware of the existence of other populated worlds. That possibility frightens many, including the Karhidish king, who views Genly as an invader, someone to fear. Also, in a land of androgynes, Genly's monosexuality makes him the freak, the deviant to be gaped at or avoided. Genly explains, "That's him, look, there's the Envoy. Of course that was part of my job, but it was a part that got harder not easier as time went on; more and more often I longed for anonymity, for sameness. I craved to be like

everybody else" (LHD, pp. 13-14). And while the Gethenians view Genly as other, he views them likewise.

As an extreme outsider, Genly finds it exceedingly difficult to appreciate and understand Gethenian psychology. For one thing, the Gethenian concept of time lacks the sense of urgency that Genly has previously known. The people of Gethen do not denumerate years--they count each year as Year One. No sense of fleeting time makes them seek more rapid progress; there is always plenty of time. Even their cross-country vehicles move at only twenty or so miles per hour. Even more frustrating to Genly is the Karhidish code of conduct called shifgrethor, which he translates as ". . .prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship, the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority in Karhide and all civilization of Gethen" (LHD, p. 19). In the Karhidish world of politics and diplomacy, nothing is stated directly, and all verbal communication contains several levels of meaning. Genly constantly runs the risk of offending those he attempts to befriend and persuade in his struggle to learn more of Karhide and the Karhidish and to inform them about his own experience with the Ekumen. Not being able to decipher this complicated code bewilders and maddens him--especially when he cannot discern the true meaning of what is spoken. He knows he will continue to be the other as long as he cannot "break" this code and truly communicate with Karhidish subtlety. Of course, Genly's concept of individual sexuality conflicts with Gethenian reality. Dropping his pre-conceived notions of the separation of male and female proves the most difficult of his adjustments: "Though I had been nearly two years on Winter I was still

far from being able to see the people of the planet through their own eyes. I tried to, but my efforts took the form of self-consciously seeing a Gethenian first as a man, then as a woman, forcing him into those categories so irrelevant to his nature and so essential to my own" (LHD, p. 17). He finds himself distrusting Gethenians and being glad of his difference because of their "feminine" traits which make them suspect by earthly standards. Also jarring to Genly is the realization that one is not automatically deemed more or less worthy according to sex: "One is respected and judged only as a human being. It is an appalling experience" (LHD, p. 94). Gethenian physiology and psychology send Genly reeling into deep culture shock, but before he can accept and be accepted by Gethenians, he must overcome conceptions fundamental to his life and survival off-Gethen.

Androgynes provide as interesting a vehicle to approach characterization as did the ten-clone of "Nine Lives." Furthermore, LeGuin's development of this society of androgynes permits her to explore the existing inequities of reality and to further stress her theme of the individual's fear of the other. Unable to resist, LeGuin plays with the idea of the androgyne and what kind of society it would develop. She suggests that such a society might be more orderly without need for thousands of laws and hundreds of courts to enforce them. If people went into "heat," or kemmer as it is called in the novel, periodically, they would not have sexual tensions interrupting the rest of their time. The Gethenians view "normal" sexuality as faintly disgusting and decidedly obtrusive since in their eyes a person from Earth is in a constant state of kemmer. Furthermore, LeGuin speculates on the relative

freedom the androgyne would enjoy contrasted with the lack of freedom of a woman: "The fact that everyone between seventeen and thirty-five or so is liable to be. . .'tied down to childbearing,' implies that no one is quite so thoroughly 'tied down' here as women, elsewhere, are likely to be--psychologically and physically. Burden and privilege are shared out pretty equally; everybody has the same risk to run or choice to make. Therefore nobody here is quite so free as a free male anywhere else" (LHD, p. 93). As well as all members of the androgynous society sharing the risk of pregnancy, they also accept sexual desires and acts as natural functions--no one is "punished" for expressing these desires. Overall, the LeGuin androgyne has a healthier and more intelligent approach to sex and sexuality than the most liberal of Californians.

Another common theme in LeGuin's literature assumes woman as other. In The Left Hand of Darkness, the androgynes are free from such an assumption because each is indeed both man and woman. Genly Ai, however, is not free from such an attitude. Frequently, he finds himself surprised and disturbed by the "femaleness" of the Gethenians--especially Estraven: ". . .it was impossible to think of him as a woman, that dark, ironic, powerful presence near me in the firelit darkness, and yet whenever I thought of him as a man I felt a sense of falseness of imposture: in him, or in my own attitude towards him?" (LHD, pp. 17-18). And later Genly admits to Estraven, "In a sense, women are more alien to me than you are" (LHD, p. 223). Although Genly realizes his prejudice is at fault here, he still views Estraven as strange, as suspicious, as other, and the female side of the androgyne

is what Genly cannot accept. LeGuin's androgynous culture would be free of such logic gaps. As explored earlier, the Gethenians being male and female in one, the potential balance of Yin and Yang, implies integration within the self--or at least a greater potential for integration. Although Estraven acknowledges dualism as an "essential," he is speaking of the fear the individual holds for the other, which LeGuin proclaims is a literally universal problem.

Along with the fear between individuals, Genly must also deal with the fear between countries. Two countries divide Gethen--Karhide and Orgoreyn, and their mutual threat may lead Gethen to its first war. Karhide, the first country on Winter observed by Genly, is structured loosely with individual lords and fiefdoms as the centers of control. Few country-wide laws exist, and the king has little real power except to banish the occasional traitor from the kingdom. Orgoreyn, on the other hand, is a repressive bureaucracy allowing no personal freedom for its citizens. Orgoreyn's control has reached frightening proportions as evidenced by Genly's imprisonment in the labor camp. Citizens of Karhide and Orgoreyn do not visit or trade with each other's countries. Also no reliable radio communication takes place; only rumors and government bulletins reach citizens' ears. The Karhidish government's efforts to stir patriotic fervor to lead to war over border disputes horrify Estraven. He explains to Genly: ". . .I don't mean love, when I say patriotism. I mean fear. The fear of the other. And its expressions are political, not poetical: hate, rivalry, aggression. It grows in us year by year" (LHD, p. 22). Estraven alone sees and abhors governmental efforts to encourage and nurture fear of the Orgoreyn

other. This abhorrence spurs his own efforts to support Genly Ai and his mission.

Isolation, literal, metaphorical, and spiritual, is an essential stop on the path the LeGuin protagonist must follow to reach the I-Thou relationship and to touch. Millions of miles separate Genly from his own culture; many years separate him from his family and friends due to the time jumps involved in space travel. Thus isolated, he arrives on a planet of androgynes where he is the only monosexual person. So not only is he bizarre in Gethenian eyes, but also he will most likely be without a sexual partner for the duration of his stay on Gethen. His difficulty and impatience with shifgrethor further cuts him off from the inhabitants of Gethen. Both governments of Karhide and Orgoreyn keep him ignorant of his position primarily because they cannot believe that he comes in peace and because they might be able to find some way to use him for their own purposes against the other. After he has been a while in Orgoreyn, that government seizes his ansible, his means of instantaneous communication with his ship and shipmates orbiting the planet, and imprisons him in a labor camp where his death is certain. His isolation is intensified when a fellow prisoner in kemmer selects him as a partner, and he is unable to provide even this small comfort. In that prison, Genly Ai would have died, totally alone, without Estraven's help.

Similarly, Estraven is a man isolated from his family and past. In Karhide, no incest taboo exists, yet siblings cannot vow kemmering (i.e., swear to, essentially, marry). Young Estraven and his brother, Arek, loved each other deeply, defied the taboo, and produced a child

together. They could not, however, stay together, so Estraven left. Soon after, Arek died, and Estraven never forgot that vow and never loved another as wholly. And now, because of that vow, Estraven cannot return to his family or his son. Furthermore, by supporting the envoy's mission (although not always seeming to do so), Estraven ruins his own political career and finds himself an outcast from his native country: "It is hard, I found, to be called traitor. Strange how hard it is, for it's an easy name that sticks, that fits, that convinces. I was half convinced myself" (LHD, p. 75). He flees to Orgoreyn to escape death and finds life there relatively comfortable but hates the regimentation and misses his homeland. Added to his sense of isolation are his feelings that he is responsible for Genly's failure in Karhide and his being an ignorant lamb in a country of knowledgeable wolves in Orgoreyn. When the envoy is arrested and imprisoned, Estraven acts. He rescues the alien by posing as a guard and claiming that the alien is dead. Then they face a dramatic cross country journey over the Gobrin Ice where death is a very real possibility.

Here, the two are as physically isolated as two people have ever been on this planet. Totally cut off from any form of civilization, they must struggle to work together in order to survive their dangerous return to Karhide. But even together, they are still separate. During their journey, Estraven enters kemmer, and Genly cannot fulfill that intense need: "For us to meet sexually would be for us to meet once more as aliens" (LHD, p. 235). At this point, Genly and Estraven's relationship moves to a higher plane. Nayles explains, "The sexual tension between Genly and Estraven means that their relationship can no

longer be understood completely in terms of male camaraderie. But neither can it be wholly understood as taking place in the more passionate realm of erotic love. Although both are components of the relationship, neither is allowed to be the defining factor."[9] In other words, neither type of relationship--friend or lover--adequately describes the intimacy of the two men who have touched despite their alienness, their difference. Once returned, Estraven is indeed a man without a country as he is still banished from Karhide and may be killed on sight there and will probably be killed or imprisoned if he makes it back across the border into Orgoreyn. He is caught and killed attempting flight, and once again, Genly is left alone without his friend who saved his life and, thus, accomplished his mission for him. Even the arrival of Genly's monosexual comrades does not diminish his sense of isolation, for now, so immersed in Gethenian culture, he sees the men and women from his ship as the freaks and sees what he must look like to the Gethenians.

But by realizing isolation and recognizing the other may be embraced, one may touch and be touched; one may achieve the I-Thou relationship. Thus Genly and Estraven touch each other on the Ice, hundreds of miles from anyone else. Interestingly, Estraven was free of fear of the other, specifically Genly, all along: "It is strange, I am the only man in all Gethen that has trusted you [Genly] entirely, and I am the only man in Gethen that you have refused to trust" (LHD, p. 189). Estraven alone has the wisdom and foresight to want the joining of his planet with the reason and beauty of the Ekumen. Genly, on the other hand, has a more difficult time recognizing and accepting

Estraven's help. But as Karen Sinclair observes, "By overcoming his own egoism, he [Genly] learns that differences do more than create boundaries; opposition is a means of relating."[10] Only on the Ice does Genly learn that Estraven is an honorable man to be trusted and befriended, and here they learn to deeply care for and respect each other. The grim business of survival streamlines rites of passage into friendship, and they soon learn to "pull together." Estraven drops the formality of shifgrethor, and Genly drops the foolishness of male ego; each drops his defenses for the other. Genly even learns to accept Estraven's androgyny, to accept his "feminine" half. And by accepting this in Estraven, he accepts the duality of all Gethenians. Without Estraven, Genly could not have accomplished his mission to join Gethen with the Ekumen. Until he touched the Gethenian, he could not overcome his own ignorance, blindness, and prejudice and touch Gethen. As Thomas Remington points out, ". . .[E]ach of us needs 'the other' in order to define himself or herself, and the Other cannot be reached save through love. Thus it is that no one can be truly an individual without receiving a touch of difference, a touch of love."[11] By accepting the other, accepting his differences, and learning from his "touch of difference," one can transcend the I-It relationship into the I-Thou relationship. Just as Estraven touched Genly, Genly touched Estraven through the beauty of his mission of union and peace, and so, together, they are able to convince Karhide to join the Ekumen and touch innumerable others on worlds never seen.

The Ekumen is LeGuin's ultimate symbol of touching: "Not We and They; not I and It; but I and Thou. Not political, not pragmatic, but

mystical. In a certain sense the Ekumen is not a body politic, but a body mystic" (LHD, p. 245). Certainly, one cannot explain a union with such amorphous structure as other than a league of worlds communicating and touching. Rafail Nudelman states, "The way to a united universe goes through the reunification of people; the way to a league between individual people becomes a sign and equivalent for a way to cosmic unification."[12] What begins with the individual ends with worlds of individuals in unions built not on external laws and restrictions and regulations but on internal trust and belief and respect. The I-Thou relationship does not necessarily have to stop with the individual; in LeGuin's world it can extend far beyond.

Although The Left Hand of Darkness ends with Estraven's death and Genly's guilt and return to isolation, the ending is ultimately optimistic, and the theme of touching is once more reinforced. The embodiment of that optimism is Estraven's son, Sorve Harth. Genly makes a pilgrimage to Estraven's family to assure them their loved one was no traitor and to assuage his own guilt. Sorve finally asks, "'Will you tell me how he [Estraven] died?--Will you tell me about the other worlds out among the stars--the other kinds of men, the other lives?'" (LHD, p. 283). In the boy's brief questions lie curiosity, open-mindedness, and hope for the future. Indeed, they reflect LeGuin's own perpetual optimism. So much is to be learned and looked forward to in the future that only very little time may be spent in dwelling on losses and failures. Touching is an on-going achievement of the living, and always so much more can and must be attempted.

CHAPTER 4

LeGuin's continued exploration of the individual's all-important need to communicate significantly with another perhaps is most successfully accomplished in The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia (1974).[1] In this novel, LeGuin introduces the most complexly isolated character of the three works examined in this paper. Shevek, a brilliant physicist who has known isolation his entire life, has a gift to offer: instantaneous communication--regardless of distance. This man who has been emotionally isolated from most of his peers almost since birth knows he is near discovering the mathematical means for breaking down the barrier of distance between people. He can make it possible for different individuals from different planets to speak to each other, to communicate with each other, and to touch each other. His home world, however, does not want his gift, and other worlds want it for selfish and ultimately destructive purposes. Shevek's goal, then, is to find the correct recipient for his gift so that it may benefit all worlds and not just one.

But in The Dispossessed, LeGuin adds a new emphasis to expand her "touching" theme--the importance of a personal code of ethics, the internalization of morality.[2] Shevek's isolation from his peers results primarily because of his reluctance, perhaps even his inability, to follow; his is not a sheep mentality. He finds it increasingly difficult to accept what his comrades proclaim as truths. He questions their

truths and finds them deficient. They want to isolate their world from other worlds, but he wants to open his world to other worlds to learn from them and grow. He, therefore, proceeds, reluctantly at first, to discover his own truths: "As a true Odonian, he [Shevek] recognizes that the only movement forward is the constant return to the conscious personal moral imperative of a mature humanity."[3] Through his discovery, he begins to understand himself more completely and becomes a man to whom touching, the most profound sense of LeGuin's terminology, is paramount: "The sharing of meaning comes through traversing the boundary of self and negating the isolation of existential and physical separateness, by becoming connected, by becoming more whole, by initiating collective understanding. Sharing is to continue one's own journey while extending its meaning to others. It is to open oneself up for introspection and exploration by others, to become vulnerable."[4] He has touched himself, and now he may touch others. Life offers little without another with whom to share the joys--and the pains.

Once again, the setting is extremely important to the development of the story's theme. Shevek comes from a colony on a moon, Anarres, whose political ideology centers on continuing revolution in a socialist anarchy--a vast anarcho-syndicalist commune. Anarres' inhabitants struggle continuously to survive on its dry, infertile land where no greenery flourishes. No law forces the Anarresti to work; intense societal pressure accomplishes what no law ever could. Their keen sense of responsibility to the group springs from their determination to remain independent from Urras, the planet from which the

original colonists fled seven generations ago. Urras is the ultimate capitalist nightmare. Privileged Urrasti enjoy opulence straight from the era of the robber barons while the Urrasti working class exists in conditions beyond Marx's worst visions. Urras is a lush and fertile planet exploited to the utmost for profit and based on the subjugation of others. The two worlds, Anarres and Urras, are studies in opposites: where one is barren, the other is fertile; where one is community-oriented, the other is self-oriented. Yet LeGuin carefully shows that neither planet is a utopia, and herein lies the dilemma for her hero.

The process of her hero's political and emotional coming of age is the focus for The Dispossessed. Shevek grows up on a planet of political exiles determined to survive and flourish--both physically and politically. The colonists follow the writings of Odo, an old woman who died before the civilization on Anarres, the culmination of her theories, was born. Odo's works emphasize the necessity for a community-spirit, the need for cooperation, and the ideal of continuing revolution. Accusations of "egoizing" follow Shevek throughout his life. He has never comfortably fit in with the others on his home planet--not as a child and not as an adult. As an adolescent, Shevek chooses physics as his area of study and occupation--an area that requires solitary study and work: "On Anarres he had chosen, in defiance of the expectations of his society, to do the work he was individually called to do."[5] His rebellion is his own informed choice which he follows through despite the objections or suspicions of his fellow Anarresti. As a young man, he finally finds acceptance and love from a young woman, Takver. With Takver as his "partner" (Anarres' equivalent

to marriage), Shevek gains self-confidence, indeed, a new sense of self. But he still is unwilling to face inadequacies and inequities within the Odonian "un-state": "Shevek at 21 was not a prig, exactly, because his morality was passionate and drastic; but it was still fitted to a rigid mold, the simplistic Odonianism taught to children by mediocre adults, an internalized preaching. He had been doing wrong. He must do right. He did so" (TD, p. 126). He only begins to see the secret bureaucracy within this supposed anarchy after he assumes a physics teaching post, and he then realizes his previous questioning of his society was not groundless. When he realizes that he is on the verge of discovering a viable theory of simultaneity and that no one on his world wants the ability to communicate instantly with other worlds, Shevek reluctantly decides his best chances for the ultimate success of his work lie in A-Io on the planet Urras. In spite of the violent disapproval of his countrypeople, he leaves Anarres. On Urras, the beauty and seeming perfection of life there fools Shevek, but soon he learns that greed and profit motivate every desire, every emotion, every action of its privileged inhabitants. He also learns of the abysmal treatment of the laboring class and, after much effort and his own virtual imprisonment at the university, contacts dissident Urrasti. Almost killed in a massive demonstration of the working class, hunted by Urrasti soldiers, Shevek seeks and obtains asylum with the Terran (Earth) embassy and, his theory completed and given to all worlds, finally returns to Anarres, uncertain of his welcome.

The third person omniscient observer provides the point of view; in this work, LeGuin abandons experimentation with point of view as

explored in The Left Hand of Darkness and, instead, experiments with chronology. Employing the journey motif, LeGuin begins The Dispossessed with Shevek's departure for Urras, the chronological middle of the novel's plot, and ends with his return to Anarres. This pattern also echoes an Odonian aphorism: "To be whole is to be part; true voyage is return" (TD, p. 68). In other words, Shevek's journey to another world is not complete until he comes back, changed by experience, to his own world: "Through him [Shevek], the concept of the journey is redefined. Its organic, always developing nature is the energy of Odonianism, Shevek, and the novel. There can be no more fascinating journey than Shevek's journey into journeys, the intricate examination of mythic structure even as the myth itself takes place."[6] Alternating with these chapters of his voyage and return, however, are chapters in which LeGuin implements another motif--Shevek's epiphany, his coming of age. In fact, Shevek survives the shaking of the foundations of his world-view twice. The first tremor occurs when he realizes his culture, supposedly based on continuing change and revolution, has instead become static and resistant to change. He leaves wise and disillusioned in the ways of Anarres and arrives innocent and hopeful in the ways of Urras. His faith in his society has been soured, but he still believes in the basic goodness of individuals--even Urrasti individuals; he still trusts. He soon discovers, however, that his life on Urras is enveloped in deceit; things are not as they seem. The serene life of study, privilege, and comfort is grounded on the misery and subjugation of a vast working class, the existence of which he had been carefully kept unaware. Determined not to deliver his theory into

the hands of those who would wish him ignorant, Shevek himself learns the meaning of stealth and deceit. When he broadcasts his theory for all worlds, he does so primarily to prevent evil rather than promote good. He is not left totally embittered; however, his new realism does have a bitter edge. He knows he may be refused entry into his own country, yet he hopes for admission. After seeing and experiencing the world of the "profiteers," he realizes that the fundamentals of Odonianism are sound. He also knows Takver awaits his return, and his faith in her has never faltered. And, most important, he wants to come home to the society that formed him, to the society that has the potential to be a utopia without ambiguity: "He would always be one for whom the return was as important as the voyage out. To go was not enough for him, only half enough; he must come back" (TD, p. 43). No matter the consequences or results, he is going home.

Much of the impetus for Shevek's return to Anarres is its guiding philosophy, Odonianism. This theory of community (based on LeGuin's reading of the works of Kropotkin according to Philip E. Smith in his essay "Unbuilding Walls") seeks to remove the artificially imposed obstructions of class, sex, and government in order to provide a mentally, physically, and spiritually healthier way of life for its adherents than any previously offered by capitalist and/or bureaucratic governments.[7] Odo herself never saw Anarres; she died the dreamer on whose philosophy a new civilization was founded, the mother whose love and compassion intertwines with her rhetoric and theory. Odo had seen and experienced the horrors of the rigidly structured society of Urras. She even served time in prison--a practice abolished on Anarres. This

concept of imprisonment is so alien to Shevek and his childhood friends that they try to simulate the experience. They select one from among them to serve his sentence--a day and a night--in a makeshift dungeon with no light. The children are profoundly moved by the effect of the short incarceration, and Shevek's life goal later becomes the "unbuilding" of walls, carrying on the lifework of Odo. Moreover, the Odonian abolition of concepts of superiority and inferiority ideally facilitates the flow of communication which can, with time and effort and desire, result in touching. Individuals comprise the Odonian community; therefore, the individual, not a leader or a senate or a bureau, is the most important element of that society. Such importance places more responsibility on the shoulders of each individual since without cooperation, the anarchy fails. The term "social conscience," then, has a more intimate meaning to Odonians who are keenly aware that their society is based on incessant change and that they are directly involved in maintaining that change. The Odonian must make decisions on and be aware of the consequences of these changes: "Sacrifice might be demanded of the individual, but never compromise: for though only the society could give security and stability, only the individual, the person, had the power of moral choice--the power of change, the essential function of life. The Odonian society was conceived as a permanent revolution and revolution begins in the thinking mind" (TD, p. 267). On Anarres, laziness of mind and laziness of body are among the worst of "crimes." Kropotkin's collection of essays Mutual Aid purports the anti-Darwinian theory that survival through cooperation, not survival through aggression, is the stronger instinct in animals. Odonianism is LeGuin's

exploration of that optimistic theory.

Taoism, then, is a less overt influence in The Dispossessed than in many of LeGuin's previous works as she surveys a new idea. Yet she has not abandoned her Taoist influences; they have become a subtle part of her world-view. Balance is still the ideal. The worlds of Anarres and Urras stand as opposites--neither a utopia. Anarres, the equivalent of the yang, is passive, fearful of corrupting influences from the other while Urras, the equivalent of the yin, is aggressive, desiring the domination of other worlds. A blend of the two would more closely approach a utopia--a world of deeply cooperative people who are still aggressive enough to actually carry on the revolution against opposition. The free flow of communication between the two, Shevek's goal, could begin to accomplish this balance--or so Shevek believes. Likewise, on the individual scale, each person needs another in order to attain balance. Full mental and physical health is impossible for the solitary person. When Shevek isolates himself at Abbenay with physics as his only company, he finds himself becoming a person he does not like, introverted and eccentric. Alarmed, he forces himself to participate on committees and abandon his solitary lifestyle. By the time he meets Takver, he is ready to share, ready to leave himself vulnerable and open to her. Together, they achieve balance: he is the scientist concerned with the abstracts of time and space; she is the scientist concerned with living things. In fact, LeGuin develops Takver as an archetypal earth mother: "Her concern with landscapes and living creatures was passionate. This concern, feebly called 'love of nature,' seemed to Shevek to be something broader than love. There are souls,

he thought, whose umbilicus has never been cut. They never got weaned from the universe. They do not understand death as the enemy; they look forward to rotting and turning into humus. It was strange to see Takver take a leaf into her hand, or even a rock. She became an extension of it, it of her" (TD, p. 150). Takver's love and trust of all living things influence and prod Shevek to expand his own sphere of caring to first include his friends, then his planet, and finally the universe. Without the love of Takver, Shevek would most likely have become a lonely and disillusioned man; with her, he becomes a prime mover in his efforts to bring worlds together, to help humanity achieve what he has with Takver--balance. Yet this balance between individuals and between worlds is unattainable without honesty, openness, and vulnerability. Therefore, balance and touching become closely aligned.

The primary obstacle to such balance is fear of the other. And the pervasive, primary other in the minds of all Anarresti is Urras, seen as one giant, evil other rather than a population of individuals. Anarresti know very little of actual life on Urras. They have heard the tales of their beloved Odo's torture at the hands of her own countrypeople, and they know that Urras' economy is based on capitalism. In fact, the worst name to call an Anarresti is "profiteer." Anarres has attempted to cut itself off from its mother planet to the greatest degree possible. A small landing field for Urrasti cargo spacecraft provides the only point of contact between the two planets. Anarres trades locally mineable minerals with Urras in exchange for equipment otherwise unattainable. Any communication between them is highly

discouraged by the collective opinion of Anarres. The Anarresti keep themselves constantly aware of an amorphous, nameless threat from Urras as if a lapse in their vigil could bring about an end to their carefully protected lifestyle. On Urras, however, Anarres is virtually ignored. The power structure of government and business has no desire to publicize a successful anarchy. Their purposes and profits are more easily achieved if the proletariat remains powerless with no causes or dreams around which to organize. Although the working class may have no fear of the Anarresti stranger, they are given no information of that stranger's existence.

Into this atmosphere of testy co-existence comes Shevek. Just as Genly Ai was other-to-all in The Left Hand of Darkness, Shevek, likewise, has experienced being the outsider and threat both on Anarres and on Urras. Shevek's intelligence and sensitivity prompt a questioning mind. Even at an early age, Shevek incorporated into his own moral code Odo's philosophy, thus internalizing the two and making them part of him whereas most Anarresti take no such pains. Odonianism for them largely is an easily recitable catechism. Shevek's intense sense of morality alienates many of his fellow Anarresti. Furthermore, his choice of study sets him apart. Not only is advanced physics a subject understood by few, but also Shevek's theories of space and time surpass the most brilliant in the field, and the person of average intelligence finds a mind capable of such thought distinctly threatening. In his last efforts on Anarres to convince others that their anarchy has in fact become static, Shevek and Bedap, his closest friend, begin the Syndicate of Initiative (rather the future's equivalent of the American

Civil Liberties Union). The Syndicate combined with Shevek's announced desire to go to Urras is too much for the majority, and they are moved to mob violence at the scene of his departure. So Shevek leaves Anarres seen as a traitor, the ultimate other, in the eyes of all but a few Anarresti.

When Shevek arrives in A-Io on Urras, he is indeed a man without a country--or planet. Although he is graciously received and handled by his hosts, he is obviously alien to everything about the Urrasti lifestyle. The colonists to Anarres invented their own language, Pravic, when they settled their new home. Shevek has a reading knowledge of Iotic, the language of Urras, but communication problems still exist. Also physical differences exist; Urrasti are shorter than their dissident kin. Manner of dress also differs on the mother planet. With his long, straight hair and simple garb, Shevek arrives on Urras to find smooth, shaved heads and splendid, ostentatious clothing the accepted style of dress. Yet in the eyes of the Urrasti, Shevek is the ostentatious one in his conspicuously unadorned manner of grooming. Likewise, cultural differences set Shevek apart even further from the Urrasti norm. Coming from a land with no possessive pronouns, Shevek is overwhelmed by the prodigious amount of things to buy and possess in the land of the profiteer. The luxury of his quarters amazes him, and the transactions made with Iotic currency baffle him. Although at first Shevek does not fully realize it, his hosts perceive him as an object--the thing with the knowledge to provide them with greater power and wealth, the General Temporal Theory. The Urrasti working class sees Shevek as an object as well: "'The myth--the one who comes before the

millenium--a stranger, an outcast, an exile, bearing in empty hands the time to come. . .'" (TD, p. 186). To both, he brings promise--undreamed-of profit or much-dreamed-of freedom. Yet both fear him, for he may betray either one by fulfilling the dream of the other. So, at this point, both Urras and Anarres see Shevek as a threat to their respective ways of life while Shevek continues to strive to find the way which allows the two planets to work together for their mutual benefit.

Continuing the theme of person as object in The Dispossessed, LeGuin once again explores the concept of woman as object and in this novel uses the two societies and the quality of the women's lives within them as contrasts. Anarres far more closely approaches the feminist ideal than Urras. Women on Anarres enjoy an equality with men unimaginable in the real world. All women work alongside men; no job is too difficult or dirty for a woman to handle. Thus women become as much working companions as bed partners. Prostitutes, or "body-profiteers," have no place on Anarres since sex may be as casual or serious as the individual couple pleases. Eliminating the difficulties (e.g., flirtation, virginity, reputation) impeding sexual experience does much to place men and women on more equal footing. Women are no longer seen so intensely and obtusely as potential conquests. Furthermore, Odonians have no personal property; therefore, no person may be looked at as belonging to another. Marriage as a legal institution does not exist on the colony. People may make love, live together, and move on as they please. No bond holds a couple together outside their personal commitment to each other. Odonians are neither encouraged

to remain single nor discouraged from doing so. If work separates them, they know they must adjust to that separation: "They [partners] must face not only jealousy and possessiveness and the other diseases of passion for which monogomous union provides such a fine medium of growth, but also the external pressures of social organization. A couple that undertook partnership did so knowing that they might be separated at any time by the exigencies of labor distribution" (TD, p. 198). So the age-old tradition of women following their men to the ends of the earth no longer holds true. Takver, the primary female character, is a biologist specializing in aquatic life. On Anarres, where fish is the only source of meat, Takver's specialty is of extreme importance to the continuing survival of the planet's population and, therefore, is more highly valued by the community than Shevek's skill. In a society where all work for the good of that society, all are judged primarily by the work they do, not with whom they choose to live. Economic independence, moreover, frees a woman to leave an unsatisfactory relationship. Although Odonian women have sacrificed age-old traditions, they have gained great individual freedom.

Urrasti women, on the other hand, enjoy little freedom. Upper class women exist primarily as possessions, and their mode of dress emphasizes that role. In their homes or among friends, the fashionable Ioti woman wears gauzy skirts and brightly-colored jewels but nothing else. Their clothing serves as ornament, never for function. Women must make themselves as beautiful as possible; therein lies their marketability because no meaningful employment outside the home is available to them. The university in A-Io accepts only male students

since the Urrasti male power structure views women as intellectually inferior. LeGuin refrains, however, from letting the plight of women overpower the plight of all Urrasti--powerful and powerless alike--trapped in the rigidity of such a class system; her emphasis is more humanitarian than feminist. In fact, LeGuin introduces only two Urrasti women--both wives of members of the elite. One of these women, Vea, provides a subtle, yet scathing, picture of the life of an intelligent woman in a sexist society. Vea is the stereotypical bored and pampered wife. Her attraction to Shevek is aroused by his difference, the promise of diversity. Flirtation provides a mildly dangerous form of amusement, and she is egotistical enough to want to show the ascetic Anarresti what he has been missing. Sexuality is the only way she knows to communicate with men: "She was so elaborately and ostentatiously a female body that she seemed scarcely to be a human being" (TD, pp. 171-172). Vea is woman-as-ultimate-sex-object--the ultimate female other. Her flirtation with Shevek ends because he does not realize the flirtation is not to end in consummation; he has violated the rules of the game. Vea learns nothing from her experience with Shevek. She remains, as do her Ioti counterparts, isolated from other women like her and from herself, dissatisfied yet unconscious of the causes for that dissatisfaction--and ultimately powerless to alleviate that dissatisfaction alone. She faces barriers yet is unaware of them.

LeGuin's and Shevek's recurring symbol for the barriers to be broken down is the wall. Shevek's driving force is his passion for the elimination of the walls between one person and another, between one world and another. LeGuin establishes her symbol immediately at the

beginning of the novel: "There was a wall. It did not look important. It was built of uncut rocks roughly mortared. An adult could look right over it, and even a child could climb it. Where it crossed the roadway, instead of having a gate it degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of a boundary. But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall" (TD, p. 1). This particular wall surrounds the landing field on Anarres, the only point of contact with other worlds, and it is there to keep these worlds out. So this wall serves as a symbol for the Anarresti desire to keep their society apart. Shevek also uses the wall as his own personal symbol, the definition of which varies slightly. When, at the age of twenty, he feels he has "burned out" in his field, he says he has "come up against the wall for good" (TD, p. 131). Later when he becomes aware that his society no longer upholds Odo's values, he decides to establish the Syndicate of Initiative in Anarres' major city: "'I will go to Abbenay and unbuild walls'" (TD, p. 7). Yet he is frustrated with the reception of the Syndicate's stand and purpose: "'We've [Anarresti] made laws, laws of conventional behavior, built walls all around ourselves, and we can't see them because they're part of our thinking'" (TD, p. 265). In Urras, he finds the strictures of society much worse: "'Because our men and women are free--possessing nothing, they are free. And you the possessors are possessed. You are in jail. Each alone, solitary, with a heap of what he owns. You live in prison, die in prison. It is all I can see in your eyes--the wall, the wall!'" (TD, p. 184). Although he learns on Urras that his initial goal is only a hopeless dream, he knows that individual walls still may be

destroyed: "They [Ioti] think if people can possess enough things they will be content to live in prison. But I will not believe that. I want the walls down. I want solidarity, human solidarity" (TD, p. 112). The wall is what stands between two people, two worlds. Shevek's fervent belief that people can and must touch removes many of his own walls. He is holding his hand out in the dark just as Owen Pugh and Genly Ai did.

Isolation is the first wall Shevek must break down before he can seek to accomplish his ambitious goal. Unlike Genly Ai, Shevek has no Ekumen, an abiding symbol of the interplanetary union of individuals, to provide support and inspiration. He is totally alone in his journey. Only he has the gift, and only he has the courage to insure that it remains a gift. Shevek is an extraordinary character, yet not super-human: "Due to Shevek's special Odonian awareness. . .he is a sufferer who knows the extent of the pain he is causing while recognizing the rights of others at all times. His is the dilemma of being overly aware of the intricacy of human society and human motives, of knowing from his studies of time that in the web of existence, every moment bears on every other."[8] While others concern themselves with day-to-day survival, Shevek, from a very early age, knows the existential import of every decision. Shevek's childhood "prison" experiment becomes his moment of epiphany, and from that time on, breaking down the barriers is his goal. Time and again, Shevek's experiences affirm that isolation is an inevitable human condition. As an infant, Shevek waits, in vain, for his mother's return and knows the bitterness of isolation even at that young age. As a child, he resigns himself to this condition,

unconsciously believing it a natural part of existence: "Since he was very young he had known that in certain ways he was unlike anyone else he knew. Shevek was therefore used to an inward isolation, buffered by all the casual contacts and exchanges of communal life and by the companionship of a few friends" (TD, p. 86). Later as an adult, he blames himself for lacking the necessary qualities for joining with others: "His heart yearned towards them, the kindly young souls who called him brother, but he could not reach them nor they him. He was born to be alone, a damned cold intellectual, an egoist" (TD, p. 128). With the help of an old friend, Bedap, however, Shevek understands that the "sickness" is not within himself but within his society: "Bedap had forced him to realize that he was, in fact, a revolutionary; but he felt profoundly that he was such by virtue of his upbringing and education as an Odonian and an Anarresti. He could not rebel against his society, because his society, properly conceived, was a revolution, a permanent one, an ongoing process. To reassert its validity and strength, he thought, one need only act, without fear of punishment and without hope of reward: "Act from the center of one's soul" (TD, pp. 142-143). Yet few are willing to accept such responsibility; indeed, few are even aware of the existence of such responsibility. The blocking of Shevek's efforts to give his home planet his simultaneity theory, even after the Syndicate of Initiative's efforts to help him, forces him to isolate himself further. He, therefore, decides to continue his work on his theory on Urras--not to give it to the profiteers but to "sell" it to them in return for a vague spiritual commitment, a commitment to communicate.

Once on board the Urras-bound spacecraft, the profundity of the depth of his isolation overwhelms him: "'I don't understand,' he said aloud. Someone answered him. For a while he failed to comprehend that the person standing by his chair was speaking to him, answering him, for he no longer understood what an answer is. The world had fallen out from under him, and he was left alone" (TD, p. 5). On Anarres, he has at least a few allies; on Urras, he has no one, yet he naively believes he will find allies on Urras to aid him toward his as yet undefined goal. Before he finds those allies, however, Shevek must first realize his naivete. He learns his quarters at the university are "bugged" and regularly searched. He further learns that the bargain he had hoped for is impossible; he and Anarres cannot "profit" from a deal with Urras because Urras has nothing of value to offer. Shevek finally learns his hardest lesson: that there will be no absolute end to his isolation. He can touch a few; he can, perhaps, help bring worlds together, but he cannot bring about the ambitious dream he had hoped for--only time and human reason can do that: "'It was for that idea that I came here. . . .For Anarres. Since my people refuse to look outward, I thought I might make others look at us. I thought it would be better not to hold apart behind a wall, but to be a society among the others, a world among the others, giving and taking. But there I was wrong--I was absolutely wrong" (TD, p. 278). After seeing the horrors of a society based on mutual aggression, Shevek sees Anarres more clearly; despite its imperfection, it is the one society in which the potential for touching exists. It is the place where he can hold out his hand and find another's waiting to touch his in return.

Shevek's quest originally is to join his world with others, to force his world to change and grow, but finally he realizes that touching begins with one person and grows from there. His gift, which he thought to be the key to join worlds together, turns out to be nothing but potential. One human being at a time must use that key for it to have any meaning. For Shevek the real key is accepting his own definition of touching--"it begins in shared pain" (TD, p. 50). As he explains, "We can't prevent suffering. This pain and that pain, but not Pain. A society can only relieve social suffering, unnecessary suffering. The rest remains. The root, the reality. . . .If instead of fearing it and running from it, one could. . .get through it, go beyond it. It's the self that suffers, and there's a place where the self--ceases. . . .I believe that the reality--the truth that I recognize in suffering as I don't in comfort and happiness--that the reality of pain is pain. If you can get through it" (TD, pp. 48-49). Shevek finds brutal proof of his theory of shared pain when he spends a night in hiding with a fatally injured man after a working class demonstration-turned-riot is crushed by Ioti police. During the night, Shevek gives his partner in hiding what comfort he can. The other, the stranger, has no place in their dark cellar. The man eventually dies of his wound--part of his hand was shot off. And that night of shared suffering, of touching, forces Shevek to realize that all the theories in the world will not bring individuals together unless each is totally committed to sharing others' pain along with happiness, unless each can accept such awesome responsibility. As Thomas J. Remington explains: "For suffering to be sufficient, one must <u>willingly</u> share the pain of

others. One must hold out one's hand, even if by doing so one risks having the hand shot off. The gift of love shares everything impartially, suffering and joy."[9] Now Shevek's gift is no longer the beautiful and pure thing it once was. He seeks asylum with the Terran embassy and explains that he wants his theory broadcast so that all may share it. He also asks for Terran help to return home to Anarres "'. . .for which I have nothing to give in return'" (TD, p. 282). Keng, the Terran ambassador, expresses surprise that he would call his theory "nothing." To which he replies, "'Weigh it in the balance with the freedom of one single human spirit. . .and which will weigh heavier? Can you tell? I cannot'" (TD, p. 282). The gift of instantaneous communication is nothing without the sharing and touching of two caring humans to overcome life's pain, and now Shevek will return to Anarres where sharing is the way of life.

Once more, however, LeGuin rejects pessimism. During the return to Anarres, Ketho, a young Hainishman, expresses his wish to go to Anarres with Shevek. The Hainish, reminiscent of the Ekumen, is an ancient and wise civilization. As Keng describes: "They are a very strange people, the Hainish; older than any of us; infinitely generous. They are altruists. They are moved by a guilt we don't even understand . . . .They are moved in all they do, I think, by the past, their endless past" (TD, p. 280). The Hainish helped Terra salvage what it could from its ecological disasters, and they travel through the universe aiding and guiding younger, less wise worlds. Ketho comes from this tradition of kindness. Just as the Hainish gave the decimated Terra hope, Ketho gives Shevek hope: "'We [the Hainish] have tried everything.

Anarchism, with the rest. But I have not tried it. They say there is nothing new under the sun. But if each life is not new, each single life, then why are we born?'" Shevek responds, "'I said to Keng, the ambassador, that I had nothing to give in return for what her people and yours have done for me; well, maybe I can give you something in return. An idea, a promise, a risk. . .'" (TD, p. 310). Shevek's dream of bringing his world together with others is not unrealistic, for here is Ketho with his hand extended, ready to share Anarres' successes and failures, joys and sufferings, ready to touch.

CHAPTER 5

Eliminating the man-made and man-perpetuated obstacles standing between individuals provides a focus for the examination of "Nine Lives," The Left Hand of Darkness, and The Dispossessed. Breaking down these walls is not just the heroes' purpose but LeGuin's as well. LeGuin herself explains, "If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself--as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done to nation--you may hate it, or deify it; but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality. You have made it into a thing, to which the only possible relationship is a power relationship. And thus you have fatally impoverished your own reality."[1] Therefore, to deny another's personhood cuts oneself off from and destroys something of value. LeGuin's protagonists recognize this loss resulting from the various kinds of walls people build, and they attempt to correct it. To do so, they must go through three states: recognizing themselves as others, sharing the suffering of others, and, finally, touching others.

Recognizing oneself as the other, the outsider, is painful in itself. Karen Sinclair observes, "Repeatedly in her fiction we confront individuals who are of society and yet not quite a part of it. The outsider, the alien, the marginal man, adopts a vantage point with rather serious existential and philosophical implications."[2] The

sensitive LeGuin character finds himself an outsider, no matter the reason, and because of his sensitivity, learns and grows from his exclusion. Owen Pugh strongly resents his exclusion from the intimacy of the ten-clone. In fact, anger is his initial reaction. And he and his partner, Martin, childishly seek to exclude the clone-group from their established friendship. Of course, the clone never notices. Similarly, Genly Ai, whose mission is to bring the world of Gethen into the Ekumen, responds to the frustrations of his culture shock with anger. Unable to break the complex code of communication employed by the Karhidish, he has difficulty maintaining the appearance of patient envoy while inside he would love to express his anger in a satisfying burst of rage. Shevek also experiences anger; his anger, however, is inner-directed. He initially blames his own egoism to explain his role as outsider within his own culture. Unique among the three characters, Shevek also experiences the role of other both in his home-world and in the world he chooses to visit. The pain of being the other, a pain which all humans experience periodically, is only the first step. Further pain awaits LeGuin's heroes who want people, all people, brought together, not excluded.

Next, LeGuin's protagonists must share the suffering of others. Thomas J. Remington observes, "In LeGuin's science fiction novels fear and suffering are often the starting points from which human relationships must begin."[3] In "Nine Lives," Pugh grudgingly admits that the clones' exclusion of the two singletons is unconscious--they are simply not aware of excluding the two miners. Yet Pugh's real moment of understanding results from observing the physical and psychic pain of

Kaph after the loss of his nine clone-brothers and -sisters. Despite Martin's declaration that Kaph is crazy, Pugh nurses him, protects him, and counsels him--in other words, shares his suffering. Kaph's agony of loss moves Pugh to understand the self-contained beauty and security of having nine other "selves"--never to be other. Likewise, Genly Ai goes through his trial-by-suffering in order to achieve greater understanding. His change occurs on a prison train bound for an Orgoreyn concentration camp. With no heat, the prisoners share in order to keep themselves and each other alive--they give their body heat; they cooperate as a group. One of the prisoners enters kemmer and, under such desperate circumstances, seeks out Genly Ai's company. Genly reflects with self-directed bitterness that the one time he has been asked to give some real comfort to someone in need of the only form of comfort available, he cannot give it. He realizes then that he has given nothing of himself but has expected Gethenians to respond openly and enthusiastically to his empty overtures of communion with other worlds through the Ekumen. In the same manner, Shevek's moment of truth comes in a lonely night of pain and fear. During this long night, he shares a dying stranger's pain as best he can. The man dies, but Shevek learns his most valuable lesson: that his theory is empty without his and others' personal commitment behind it. His theory can achieve nothing without individuals willing, like the Hainish, to share, to leave themselves vulnerable, to touch.

Touching, then, is the final stage of LeGuin's characters' development. Through his concern and caring for Kaph and his heroic rescue of Martin, Pugh, while learning much about his own needs for the intimacy

of touching, convinces Kaph that learning to make the effort to hold out his hand in the dark makes life worth living, despite suffering and risks. Thanks to Pugh, Kaph begins to be a human being, no longer a clone along with nine others. Genly Ai, on the other hand, holds out his hand and finds Estraven's hand waiting to respond. But after all the two friends share, they must share one more tragedy--Estraven's death. The weight of guilt temporarily overwhelms Genly, but his friend's death is not in vain if the envoy's mission succeeds. And now that Genly has learned to genuinely care about the people he sought to join with his world, his mission will succeed. Estraven's death did not prove to Genly that the pain of touching is not worth the outcome; it proved that touching, while leaving one desperately vulnerable to pain, transcends ordinary human experience. Furthermore, Estraven's son and his openness to Genly's world promise a continuation of what the two men, friends despite their differences, had achieved. Like Genly, Shevek, after his night of touching a stranger, is left feeling his life's work has been folly until Ketho shows him otherwise. Ketho's willingness to share a perhaps violent reception on Anarres in order to see, experience, learn, and touch shows Shevek that, in time, this theory of instantaneous communication can fulfill its intended function.

LeGuin's theme of sharing and touching grows and develops in these three works just as her characters do. In "Nine Lives," the emphasis is on the individual learning to deal with and eventually to embrace the differences of others. Given the circumstances of the miners' isolation, they must reach through and beyond the grief of Kaph in order for him to continue living; they must show him the paramount reason for living--to

touch and be touched. Taoist influences to further develop this theme are not evident until The Left Hand of Darkness in which LeGuin asserts the importance of metaphysical balance to discourage subjugation and encourage equality among individuals and worlds. LeGuin also expands her setting to include an entire planet of people rather than a planet populated by three men. Finally, in The Dispossessed, LeGuin reaches the most ambitious and advanced development of her theme. In this novel, she includes anarchism, along with more subtle traces of Taoism, to further explore the ways societies, not just individuals, can provide a more fertile ground for the growth of human interaction. Furthermore, she expands her setting to include two planets and representatives from even more worlds and deals effectively and consistently with their national and philosophical differences. Also in this novel, she produces Shevek, a character whose moral development has far surpassed that of Pugh or Genly Ai. Shevek, unlike the other protagonists, lives by his code of personal ethics throughout the story. He is the most acutely self- and other-conscious. Pugh's wisdom is more innate and reluctant and Genly Ai must be shocked into awareness. Only Shevek carefully observes his own actions and seeks to conform himself to his own rigid yet wonderful internalized morality. Shevek is the ultimate existential hero--aware of his responsibility to carefully examine all decisions and consequences. The true utopia would be a world of Sheveks willing to face decisions, willing to take risks, and willing to touch others while never sacrificing the integrity of himself or the other. The development of LeGuin's characters' moral growth more than her development of settings or concepts reflects the continued growth of her

theme. The willingness and strength to become aware of responsibilities to others, to overcome fear of others, and to strive to touch others are far more likely in the person who carefully examines his own values and, in doing so, examines himself.

To bring all kinds of people together to understand each other, to overcome differences, to eliminate hostility, to alleviate unnecessary suffering, and to share necessary suffering are the goals of LeGuin's protagonists. All three must first learn to recognize the waste of the concept of the other, to give of themselves freely and wholly, and to accept the pain and vulnerability along with the satisfaction and joy of touching. The world must be seen as Thou rather than It. Tifft and Sullivan state, ". . .through shared speech about shared journeys, collective understanding emerges and barriers fall."[4] The greater the number of people sharing the journeys, the greater the collective understanding, the greater the solidarity. Although LeGuin's endings are never glaringly optimistic, neither are they pessimistic. Her hope for what people can accomplish for each other and with each other is always present. Becoming aware of one's responsibility to one's fellow human beings and equally sharing the pain of being human can lessen the pain of all--the self included--both in LeGuin's worlds and out of them.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

[1]Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Stone Ax and the Muskoxen," in The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction, ed. Susan Wood (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), p. 231.

[2]Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg, eds., Ursula K. LeGuin (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979), p. 11.

[3]Ursula K. LeGuin, National Book Award Acceptance Speech, Dreams Must Explain Themselves (New York: Algol Press, 1975), p. 29.

[4]Ursula K. LeGuin, "Science Fiction and Mrs. Brown," in Science Fiction at Large, ed. Peter Nicholls (London: Victor Gallancz, 1976), pp. 30-31.

[5]Ursula K. LeGuin, "American Science Fiction and the Other," Science Fiction Studies, 2 (1975), p. 208.

[6]Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex (New York: Bantam Books, 1952), pp. xvi-xvii.

[7]Ursula K. LeGuin, "Nine Lives," in Approaches to Science Fiction, ed. Donald Lawler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), p. 406.

CHAPTER 2

[1]Ursula K. LeGuin, "Nine Lives," in Approaches to Science Fiction, ed. Donald Lawler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1978), p. 406. All subsequent references to this work will be noted with the abbreviation

NL and the page number.

[2]Thomas J. Remington, "A Touch of Difference, a Touch of Love," Extrapolation, 18 (1975), p. 30.

CHAPTER 3

[1]"Winter King," written a year before The Left Hand of Darkness, is LeGuin's first development of Gethen and Gethenians. Dated after the mission of Genly Ai, the plot centers on a later king's efforts to rejoin her strayed planet with the Ekumen. Interestingly, LeGuin uses the feminine pronoun when referring to the androgynes. As she explains in her headnotes, ". . .I use the feminine pronoun for all Gethenians--while preferring certain masculine titles such as King and Lord, just to remind one of the ambiguity. This may drive some nonfeminists mad, but that's only fair." Ursula K. LeGuin, "Winter's King," The Wind's Twelve Quarters (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1976), p. 85.

[2]Rafail Nudelman, "An Approach to the Structure of Ursula K. LeGuin's Science Fiction," Science Fiction Studies, 2 (1975), p. 213.

[3]Ursula K. LeGuin, The Left Hand of Darkness (New York: Ace Books, 1969), p. 7. All subsequent references to this work will be noted with the abbreviation LHD and the page number.

[4]Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Scribner, 1958), p. 3.

[5]Robert Scholes, "The Good Witch of the West," The Hollins Critic, II (1974), pp. 1-12.

[6]Ursula K. LeGuin, "Is Gender Necessary?," in Aurora: Beyond Equality, ed. Vonda N. McIntyre and Susan Janice Anderson (Greenwich, CT:

Fawcett Pub. Inc., 1976), pp. 138-139.

[7]Barbara J. Bucknall, "Androgynes in Outer Space," in Critical Encounters: Writers and Themes in Science Fiction, ed. Dick Riley (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub. Co., 1978), p. 58.

[8]N. B. Hayles, "Androgyny, Ambivalence, and Assimilation in The Left Hand of Darkness, in Ursula K. LeGuin, ed. Joseph Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979), p. 100.

[9]Hayles, p. 108.

[10]Karen Sinclair, "Solitary Being: The Hero as Anthropologist," in Ursula K. LeGuin: Voyager to Inner Lands and to Outer Space, ed. Joe DeBolt (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), p. 58.

[11]Remington, "Touch," p. 40.

[12]Nudelman, p. 219.

CHAPTER 4

[1]In "The Day Before the Revolution," written after The Dispossessed, LeGuin details the final days of Odo, the shaper and mover of the colony she never saw. Ursula K. LeGuin, "The Day Before the Revolution," The Wind's Twelve Quarters (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1976).

[2]Internalized, personal ethics as the highest level of morality is reminiscent of Abraham Maslow's work in The Psychology of Science. Abraham Maslow, The Psychology of Science (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

[3]Peter Brigg, "The Archetype of the Journey in Ursula K. LeGuin's Fiction," in Ursula K. LeGuin, ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979), p. 63.

[4]Larry L. Tifft and Dennis C. Sullivan, "Possessed Sociology and LeGuin's Dispossessed: From Exile to Anarchism," in Ursula K. LeGuin: Voyager to Inner Lands and to Outer Space, ed. Joe DeBolt (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1979), pp. 182-183.

[5]Ursula K. LeGuin, The Dispossessed (New York: Avon Books, 1974), p. 219. All subsequent references to this work will be noted with the abbreviation TD and the page number.

[6]Brigg, p. 40.

[7]Philip E. Smith II, "Unbuilding Walls: Human Nature and the Nature of Evolutionary and Political Theory in The Dispossessed," in Ursula K. LeGuin, ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979). In her headnote to "The Day Before the Revolution," LeGuin acknowledges Kropotkin as a source.

[8]Thomas J. Remington, "The Other Side of Suffering: Touch as Theme and Metaphor in LeGuin's Science Fiction Novels," in Ursula K. LeGuin, ed. Joseph D. Olander and Martin Harry Greenberg (New York: Taplinger Pub. Co., 1979), p. 176.

CHAPTER 5

[1]LeGuin, "American," p. 209.

[2]Sinclair, p. 50.

[3]Remington, "Suffering," p. 173.

[4]Tifft and Sullivan, p. 182.

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