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SHIFGRETHOR AS THE DETERMINISTIC THEME IN URSULA K LEGUIN'S *THE
LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

BY
AMBER HANSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts

Major English

South Dakota State University

2014

SHIFGRETHOR AS THE DETERMINISTIC THEME IN URSULA K LEGUIN'S *THE
LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the Master of Arts degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree. Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidates are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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ABSTRACT

SHIFGRETHOR AS THE DETERMINISTIC THEME IN URSULA K LEGUIN'S *THE
LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

2014

While Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* has received much attention, scholars have largely overlooked one dynamic and integral device found in the novel, that of *shifgrethor*. This thesis offers an exposition of this LeGuinian device, by examining *shifgrethor* as theme within a Russian Formalism framework, by first establishing a working definition, and then by examining the device used within the novel to establish it as a theme.

In the first chapter, I offer the reasons behind my interest in the novel and then move into providing an overview of previous research done on *The Left Hand of Darkness* in chapter two. In the third chapter, I provide a framework for the analysis in Russian Formalism. I offer a review of the movement and spend particular attention on Viktor Shklovsky's *defamiliarization*. Additionally, I develop a working definition of "theme" that builds an outline for the ensuing analysis and argument.

In chapter four, I argue *shifgrethor* as theme by first establishing a working definition through a close reading of the text paired with the sociolinguistic work of Deborah Tannen's *You Just Don't Understand* (i.e., oneupsmanship). After defining *shifgrethor*, I argue the Le Guinian term as theme by using defamiliarization and sociolinguistical devices paired with an indepth and close reading of *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Truth is a matter of the imagination.” When I read those words on the first page of *The Left Hand of Darkness* (*LHD*) as an undergraduate student, I pondered for a moment about the wording and about the meaning. And then, I ignored how existential it felt, and I jumped into the novel. I stopped reading on the Gobrin Ice and basked in the beauty and coincidence of reading about a frozen wasteland while a South Dakota winter blew outside the walls of my dorm room. I came away from *LHD* deeply fond of snow but completely ignoring the truth of the novel. As a graduate student, I focused on *LHD* in multiple courses, except at that point, I wanted to focus on reading the novel as it presented itself to me. Those words, “truth is a matter of the imagination” struck me as a quite the introduction to a novel that offered readers a report-like feel. Was truth not absolute? Was truth not scientific? When reading *LHD* as a graduate student, I realized how perfunctory reading became. Rush. Skim. Gloss over. Index. Google. Critical thinking occurred in class where professors lambast students with questions. What motivation did the main character have? What does the green of this section imply? How does the death affect this character? What does this bird signify? When reading *LHD*, however, and letting the novel unfold before me—without preconceptions and biases—I realized quite quickly that *LHD* encourages critical readers by revealing only small glimmers of itself until a reader actually stops and focuses. When a reader invests in the novel, only then does it step out of the darkness and unveil its glory.

When I moved closer to its light, however, I realized quite quickly that much of the novel’s past had been overshadowed by feminist readings. The communications and, in particular the created device of *shifgrethor*, barely made a ripple in bibliographies of

collected works about the novel. This analysis developed out of my enjoyment in finding the light emanating from *LHD* and focuses on a topic within a framework which has been equally ignored. Yet shifgrethor and Russian Formalism thrust readers – especially experienced readers – into a position of unfamiliarity. A reader cannot simply read Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Left Hand of Darkness*; a reader must stop and absorb to comprehend fully.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

i. LE GUIN AND *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*

Ursula K. Le Guin is an astonishing writer. Throughout her decades long career, she has won numerous awards including the Nebula, Hugo, Locus, Jupiter, and lifetime achievement awards. She became a finalist in 1985 for a National Book award and in 1992 for a Pulitzer prize. The list of her writings continues to grow today and she has currently written over 30 novels and children’s books and dozens of short stories. She has written screenplays, essays, translations, and criticisms. Throughout her ongoing writing career, her novels, in particular, have garnered much praise for her writing techniques and the topics that she focuses on. Amy M. Clarke, a lecturer at University of California, Davis, offers

Ursula Le Guin is beyond question one of the great science fiction and fantasy writers of our time. She stands alongside J.R.R.

Tolkien and C.S. Lewis for the quality and mythic status of her Earthsea series, while *The Dispossessed* and *The Left Hand of*

Darkness are among the most important science fiction novels of the twentieth century. (Clarke 1)

In 2001, the Western Writers Series devoted their 148th issue to Le Guin, where Heinz Tschachler emphasizes Le Guin's use of science fiction and fantasy to contrast and portray contemporary American life. Warren G. Rochelle, professor of English at the University of Mary Washington, asserts, "her rhetoric, when placed in historical and sociocultural context, becomes the rhetoric of Emerson, Thoreau, Pierce and Dewey: American romantic/pragmatic rhetoric – a rhetoric that argues for value to be given to the subjective, the personal and private, the small, and the feminine" (xi). Ursula K. Le Guin is not just a speculative fiction writer; she is an American fiction writer who is as worthy of research and analysis as any American fiction writer. In fact, Harold Bloom named Ursula K. LeGuin and *The Left Hand of Darkness* as a part of his United States canon (564).

A consistently acclaimed novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (*LHD*) has found popularity from its first publication. It has been translated into dozens of languages and reprinted in 2009 to celebrate and commemorate its forty year birthday. Donna R. White, associate professor of English at Arkansas Tech University, states, "*The Left Hand of Darkness* is one of the seminal texts of science fiction, as important and influential as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*" (46). The novel garnered Le Guin with both a Nebula award and a Hugo—two of the most prestigious awards offered to science fiction and fantasy writers. As a continuously in-print novel, *LHD* has found success in classrooms and the academic world in addition to its large readership and science fiction and fantasy acclaim. In 1996, the novel ranked as the top science fiction and fantasy novel taught in

literature and language courses in college (Evans 525) but it offers more than a suspenseful story to captivate scholars' attentions. In 1976, Ursula K. Le Guin wrote, in an introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, that readers of the novel should interpret it as a, "thought experiment." She offered that the book was not "about the future" and that, "The artist deals with what cannot be said in words. The Artist whose medium is fiction does this *in words*. The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words" (12). This paradox and the ensuing paradoxes in *The Left Hand of Darkness* have moved many scholars to dissect the novel.

In its initial reception *The Left Hand of Darkness* received much attention, especially surrounding the gender theme in the novel. Critic and science fiction author Alexei Panshin, in a 1969 review of the novel, condemned Le Guin's use of English male pronouns as he thought they made the Gethenians "seem purely male" (51). Stanislaw Lem, a Polish science fiction writer, became one of the most active critics of *LHD* when he lambasted Le Guin for what he saw as a missed opportunity to expand upon the genderless society. Lem argued that the society's lack of gender should have affected their overall lives and relationships. In Lem's critique of *LHD*, he offered how Le Guin could have framed the novel by focusing on the people and their lives instead of Genly's job and what Lem found "the orthodox SF structure" filled with "the superficial stereotypes and clichés of SF" (24). Nevertheless, Joanna Russ noted in 1974 at the tail end of "The Image of Women in Science Fiction" that Le Guin had trouble with gender because of an absence of neutral pronouns in the English language. Russ further expresses that the main character, Genly Ai, biased and gendered the novel as his narrations commonly viewed Gethenians as men and women (Russ 1974). Many readers

and critics aligned with early criticism made by Lem and Panshin (Friend; Ketterer; Hayles; Bucknell; Brown; Rabkin; Clarke) and yet others understood Russ's points. John Pennington, for example, argues that, while critics devalue *LHD* because it did not go far enough with gender, readers themselves create the gender. Pennington asserts *LHD*'s famous quote, "The King was pregnant," functions as "a central metaphor for the reading strategy the reader is asked to perform" (352). Here Pennington argues readers must look outside their own gender. He notes that, as science fiction and fantasy writers must do, Le Guin explained the fantastic in everyday language. Christine Cornell further asserts readers will inevitably identify through gender because Genly Ai, offers his interpreted experiences for readers to follow. Cornell argues Genly Ai cannot read much of what goes on around him until he sheds his preconceived ideas about gender, similar to how readers must also rid themselves of gender notions (317-327). Barbara Brown discusses gender in "Androgyny, Future, Present, and Past," and looks at how androgyny orients the novel in time. Le Guin, Brown explains, looks at humanities' past, present, and future, delving into Freud and developing "beyond gender limitation" (226).

What might have made gender a more popular subject for critics to analyze may have been how Le Guin handled the critics' exchanges: by responding. In 1976, in "Is Gender Necessary?," Le Guin wrote in response to feminist critics "The fact is that the real subject of the book is not feminism or sex or gender or anything of the sort; as far as I can see, it is a book about betrayal and fidelity" (8). Yet, in 1987, Le Guin conceded in "Is Gender Necessary? Redux" that she wrote her initial words out of anger, and "The fact is, however, that there are other aspects to the book, which are involved with its sex/gender aspects quite inextricably" (8). Furthermore, she continued to maintain what

she saw as her focus of the novel, “It was a heuristic device, a thought experiment. [...] The subject of my experiment, then, was something like this [...] I eliminated gender to see what was left” (9-10). What Le Guin found when contemplating this world were three elements characteristic of her genderless world, “the absence of war,” “the absence of exploitation,” and “the absence of sexuality as a continuous social factor” (10-12). While gender caused an initial stir over the novel, and scholars still publish gender-focused analyses today, academics have since found other aspects of *LHD* to analyze.

Research published since the gender wave has examined many aspects of the novel’s content, form, and plot. Scholars have looked at themes of journey (Brigg; Benczik), ambivalence (Theall), touch (Remington), myth (Bittner; Walker; Bloom), and boundaries and doubles (Selinger). They have analyzed the novel’s point of view (Rabkin), rhythm (Barry and Prescott), setting (Cogell), public and private spheres (Huntington), and features revolving around political and utopian concepts (Huntington; Call; Theall; Moylan; Marcellino). Scholars have dissected the Tao as a foundation for Gethenian society (Bain) and argued imagery created dualities (Barbour). Most scholarship, however, does not simply rest in one type of analysis as scholars have found the dynamic novel calls for multilayered approaches. Martin Bickman, for instance, finds wholeness and harmony developed from the novel’s form and content and dichotomies and dualities present (42-47). Jim Jose analyzes the narrative structure, but through it he also develops ideas about Le Guin’s political concerns and intent in writing *LHD* (180-197). One topic of interest that scholars have also focused on and developed multilayered approaches centers around the communications present in the novel.

Scholars see communication as a necessary underpinning in the novel and many argue of the centrality of communications in all of Le Guin's work (Jose, Theall, Spencer). Donald Theall, for example, explains "the prime theme of her novels and, in fact, the unifying theme of her Hainish novels, is communication" (258). Many aspects of communication have presented deep possibilities for analysis. Theall, for example, notes how Le Guin preoccupies her novels with dualities, and communication dichotomies. Through these contradictions, communication develops out of what Theall sees as the "paradox of communication: in order to communicate, it is necessary to recognize differences and to move toward an understanding of these differences" (263-264). Kathleen L. Spencer explains communication makes up a central cluster of themes in Le Guin's novels and she looks at *LHD* through an anthropological lens. Spencer focuses on communication grown out of isolated characters, exiled from their home lands, through the concepts of Anthropologist Victor Turner (32-43). Victoria Myers offers a linguistic analysis of speech acts characters commit and how these acts muddy communication and create impediments for the characters who gain a "sense of gradual growth and enlightenment – in overcoming the barricades to communication" (306). Jeanne Murray Walker focuses on social exchange developed out of myths. By using Claude Levi-Strauss' anthropological theories, Walker argues that social exchange exists at the core of myth, offering that economic, linguistic, and kinship exchanges build social exchange (172). With an anthropological approach, Walker ferrets out a fuller understanding of the Gethenian myths in *LHD*, but she fails to focus on the linguistic aspects of the social exchange, instead, spending much of her argument on kinship exchanges (180-189).

While communication remains a steadfast element scholars find in *LHD*, scholars have focused less on the “Le Guinian” communication device of *shifgrethor*.

Scholars have given *shifgrethor* short shrift. *Shifgrethor* has received such little research, in fact, that studies lack references to and specific page occurrences to the term instead of any real analyses. Instead, many scholars often completely ignore *shifgrethor*. Donald F. Theall avoids *shifgrethor* even though he analyzes communications and interactions in the novel. Victoria Myers’ study of conversation in “Conversational Technique in Ursula Le Guin: A Speech Act Analysis” brings up the term once; but instead of making the term a part of the argument, she ignores it. Kathleen L. Spencer also sidesteps the issue in her exposition of *LHD*. While Spencer does focus on more than just *LHD* and devotes much time to setting up her anthropological approach, when she dives into the communication of the novel, *shifgrethor* does not appear in the analysis. These instances offer only a sampling of the scholarship centered on communication that ignore the term entirely.

While scholars have not devoted entire analyses to *shifgrethor*, they have referenced the device on several occasions. Some scholars summarize the term by explaining it through similarities they see to other devices. Sneja Gunew, for instance, sees commonalities between the Renaissance *virtu*, the Celtic *geas*, and Chinese “saving face” (185). Through the likenesses she sees, Gunew finds *shifgrethor* “comprises the identity by which a man wishes to be recognized by his peers” (185). Other scholars look at how *shifgrethor* connects to parts of the text. N.B. Hayles finds the connections that *shifgrethor* has with shadow and war in the novel: “Like a shadow, the word implies an attachment to a specific person or object. Unlike war, it cannot be easily separated from

the personal and translated into an impersonal abstraction” (103). These summations, however, do not explicate and contextualize the term. While Gunew may see similarities between shifgrethor and other devices, her explanation appears baseless without any real exposition. Hayles devised her brief explanation through connections, but it results in a bulky and confusingly, brief description. Further summations prove similarly faulty.

Carrie B. McWhorter asserts the many levels of shifgrethor, “person-to-person, nation-to-nation, and even planet-to-planet” found on Gethen and she argues how shifgrethor is a “weapon the Gethenians use to challenge the natural order of their world” (11), yet she neither explains what the true order of the world is, nor offer how – beyond very brief examples – the weapon is wielded. Elizabeth Cummins uses Theren Harth rem ir Estraven’s own wording in her summation of shifgrethor in which she describes as “a duel of language in which each participant circumvents giving, or accepting, either advice or blame” (76). While many of these summations delve little into the intricate details of shifgrethor, three analyses showcase detailed analysis.

George Edgar Slusser focused on shifgrethor in his 1972 explication of Le Guin in *The Farthest Shores of Ursula K. Le Guin*. In the analysis, Slusser allocates twelve pages to summarizing *The Left Hand of Darkness* and in these pages readers find the first real analysis of shifgrethor. Slusser notes the etymological background, offered by Theren Harth rem ir Estraven, of the term and explores the multiple levels and ways characters use shifgrethor (23-24). He further notes, “the ultimate act of shifgrethor is to abandon it” and further explains that the novel aligns the term to darkness and clarifies by including textual examples (24-25). Like Slusser, Charlotte Spivack also spends more time analyzing the term in her summary and analysis of *LHD* and arrives at a definition

of shifgrethor not through Therem Harth rem ir Estraven's eyes, but Genly Ai's, "the subtle Gethenian code of behavior known as 'shifgrethor,' as elusive but all important attitude underlying all human relationships" (46). Later, she further elaborates that Gethenians channel their "natural competitiveness" through the shifgrethor, which results in their absence of war and develops shifgrethor by noting how it affects Gethenians at an individual level but that its undercurrents touch all "social and political actions" (51). Spivack connects shifgrethor to competitiveness and sees the device causing the lack of war on the planet. Furthermore, she notes the individual level on which shifgrethor often takes place (51). Nora Barry and Mary Prescott give attention to the device although their main focus of analysis remains the rhythm. Early on in their analysis, the two scholars allude to shifgrethor (159), but then focus on it as an example of rhythm (161-163). Barry and Prescott note the reoccurrences of the device and the interest of the term Genly Ai displays. Additionally, they explain, "Le Guin offers a counterpoint to Genly's naivete by providing Estraven's more informed remarks" (161). These analyses and the previous research devoted in part to summations of shifgrethor pinpoint one glaring fact of the necessity for further illumination into the device. Previous scholars' attentions to shifgrethor identify the importance of the device, but their brevity also demonstrates shallow analysis characterized by lack of exemplification. And the little attention paid to shifgrethor clearly makes previous analyses fail in defining and convincingly illuminating the term for readers. Only a thorough analysis of *LHD* and a deeper investigation of the term can substantiate a comprehensive perception of the term. In using a theory that focuses on the text and derives a definition from contextually studying the term, a fully clear understanding of shifgrethor can be established as a basis for further study.

III. THEORY

i. HISTORY OF FORMALIST THEORY

Over the last one hundred years, Formalist theory, the first modern Narrative Theory (Castle 115), has met with a wide range of attitudes, from surprise, acceptance, and attacks. Stemming out of linguistics, Formalist theory pushed against contemporary literary scholars who focused on Positivism and Symbolism that analyzed and critiqued the narrative through what Formalists believed had created a biased and limited vision. Formalism first found its way to literature through Russian Formalism in the early 1900's (183) out of the Moscow Linguistic Circle with the academic rigor of Roman Jakobson, Boris Eikhenbaum, Viktor Shklovsky, along with the Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ) organized by Viktor Shklovsky, Boris Eikhenbaum, and Lev Yakubinsky (Gorman 134). Both the Moscow Linguistic Circle, founded in 1914, and the OPOJAZ, founded in 1916, focused first on deconstructing narrative by its own science made up of narrative devices, where the question posed when analyzing centered not on the plot or authorial intent, but on what literary devices constructed the narrative. This focus, formalists believed, forced scholars to look at the literary devices that constructed the novel (Matejka and Pomorska 274) and, in essence, forced scholars to maintain literature as the imperative of research.

This novel-centric approach rejected assumptions predisposed by the Symbolists and reasoned for a bottom up approach, "In order to know our subject intimately, we must make this subject the starting point of our study. Only then can we move outward and set up further relations" (Matejka and Pomorska 276). Thus formalists intended to start analyses with close readings of the text, focusing on particulars that the text

warranted. Early in Russian Formalists' examinations of literary theory, they developed concepts that built the foundations of Formalist theory, especially in the concepts of form, content, device, function, and motivation. In addition, because many of the early formalists had extensive backgrounds in linguistics, Formalism appropriated Structuralist linguistic terms such as *synchrony* and *diachrony*. In aggregate these metalinguistic literary devices allowed Formalism to evolve into a theory that focused less on the sciences of other fields and more on the science of words.

An Anglo-American variety of Formalism, called New Criticism, began making its way into literary studies in the early twentieth century and became a primary literary theory in scholarship throughout the 1950's and early 1960's (Castle 122) and officially found its name after John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism* was published in 1941 (Brooks 320). Growing out of a sharp criticism of a stale literary scholarship that included only historicism and philology, New Critics wanted to analyze literature free from the historical method and expressionism. While Formalist theory before this, with Russian Formalism, held many similar features over the various Formalist circles, the Anglo-American formalism was an aggregation of approaches that agreed on basic tenets. New Critics affirmed that the narrative was autonomous and "that its unity and meaning are constituted primarily by formal and rhetorical features, and that it is free from any burden of reflection on the social world in which it is produced or from any connection with the author who produces it" (122). New critics, while they differ on end goals and focusing, all shared the same common tenets about the autonomous novel, and the importance of the narrative when analyzing it (126). In addition, New Critics generally

refused to include “moral or ethical considerations into their interpretive methodologies” and instead maintained the science-like approach of the early Russian Formalists.

Critics of New Formalism blasted the theory for being an imitation of aestheticism and explication de texte, for being unhistorical, and for trying to make criticism a science. And reactions to New Criticism in the academic field divided academia into camps of “scholars”—the professors and scholars who wanted to continue with philology and literary history—and “critics”—scholars entrenched in New Criticism ideals (Logan xxiii-xxv). Throughout the animosity of their opponents, New Critics like John Crowe, I.A. Richards, William Empson, Allen Tate, Cleanth Brooks, T.S. Eliot, Yvor Winters and others developed Anglo-American Formalism by focusing on literature not through creating a science of literature, but by supporting clarity and efficiency (Pound 16-38). Ezra Pound, in his 1929 “How to Read” explained that New Criticism emphasizes authors and their work where they have invented something new instead of reading and rereading imitators (16-38). Pound explains that, similar to how scholars learn sciences—learning about the scientists and their discoveries, not about those who do not discover anything—a literary scholar then should learn about the writers and their writings that have created something new. Through close readings, New Critics analyze the construction of the text by focusing on the text itself. Cleanth Brooks offered the two basic assumptions of New Formalism in 1951 in “The Formalist Critics,” where he writes that, for formalists, the author’s intent is much less important than the “author’s intention as realized” (87) and secondly the possibility of an “ideal reader” (87) who can separate his reactions from the analysis. Brooks notes, that while no ideal reader exists, the

concept helps a reader and a critic focus on the page and not on his own reactions to the page (87).

Apart from Russian Formalists, New Critics saw form and content linked and found that form offered the meaning of the narrative. New Critics, in addition, believed in a one true reading and concluded that readings fall from this reliability by not focusing solely on the narrative and instead straying to reactions of the narratives and other sciences (Brooks 84-91). Cleanth Brooks notes that analyses entrenched in various sciences, like psychology and biology can create valid arguments, but they “describe the process of composition, not the structure of the thing composed” (86).

While Russian Formalism and Anglo-American Formalism differ in their concepts of form and content and the true reading, both of these formalisms prescribe close readings, the autonomous novel, and focusing on the science of literature – that is, by analyzing a narrative through literary devices and literary concepts. Like Russian Formalism, New Critics focused much of their time on poetry, yet the fundamentals of New Criticism cross genre boundaries in applicability as much as any other formalism does. By focusing on the text and seeing it as autonomous from everything else but language, a scholar can concentrate on the analysis of a narrative without the biases and intrusions of other sciences. Formalism *requires* a close examination of a literary piece and avoiding theories that presume theoretical, psychological, or aesthetic assumptions.

Formalism might have become increasingly disfavored in the classroom and in scholars’ minds after the 1960’s, but scholars still actively employ the theory today. Anthologies like *Praising it New: The Best of the New Criticism* and *Russian Formalism Criticism: Four Essays* renew interest in the original texts of formalism. In addition, new

analyses with a formalist approach pop up daily on databases like JSTOR. Yet, even while a new interest in formalism emerges, so too does the derision of scholars plowing down the notion of using the approach. Scholars like Jim Hansen in “Formalism and Its Malcontents: Benjamin and De Man on the Function of Allegory” and W.J.T. Mitchell in “The Commitment to Form; or, Still Crazy after All These Years” continue to dredge up reactions to formalism decades old. Today some scholars have appropriated Formalism and created “New Formalism.” Marjorie Levinson explains New Formalism developed out of various formalist incarnations and she sees the approach divided into two camps, “activist formalism” and “normative formalism.” Levinson explains critics who want to focus on form in historical analyses make up activist formalism, while she sees the normative formalists as those who want to bring back artistry and differentiate “between history and art, discourse and literature with form the prerogative of art” (559). With scholars’ new fascination with Formalist Theory, it has reemerged as a literary theory with deep roots in Linguistics that focuses on literature within the field of Literature. Even staunch critics of Formalism have to agree that formalism offers some insightful devices helpful to literary analyses. Close readings, for example, give depth to analyses that can very infrequently be duplicated otherwise. The bottom-up approach that Formalism necessitates gives a scholar first a foundation in text and then handholds when working outward toward other theoretical work. Formalism offers scholars a way to build research from a text through focusing on literary devices that build the text. The Formalist device of *defamiliarization* has also reemerged and found a renewed power of explication.

a. SHKLOVSKY'S DEFAMILIARIZATION

Developed from an automatization that Viktor Shklovsky believed occurred in practical language and Aristotle's basic assumptions of poetic language (Shklovsky 12), *defamiliarization* became one of Shklovsky's most popularly known devices. From the Russian word *ostranienie*, literally translated as "making strange," scholars refer to the word as *enstrangement*, or *estrangement*, yet most often as *defamiliarization*. Shklovsky developed many elements that became doctrinal in the Formalist approach, including ideas about parody, nonlinear literature and device, and motivation. Yet defamiliarization became a device primarily relegated to a mere one essay in "Art as Device." David Gorman sees Shklovsky's tendency to offer his insights and then leave them for others to ferret out applications, as responsible for this (135-136).

Although described as "extreme" (Gunn 25) and aloof (Gorman), as a writer, scholar, teacher, journalist and critic, and military man Victor Shklovsky busied himself in writing and researching and he became a popularly known Formalist from 1913-1930. His writings found renewed interest and analysis in the West in the 60's and 70's (Gorman 133-135), but even then scholars did not grasp onto defamiliarization. Now, however, a new interest by literary scholars in the device has resulted in published scholarship in recent years, with *Poetics Today* devoting their entire Winter 2005 and Spring 2006 issues to Shklovsky and defamiliarization. Shklovsky dives into how an author guides readers to a view of a novel outside of their own preconceived ideas through defamiliarization. In his essay, Shklovsky guided readers to an understanding of what constitutes defamiliarization and how it works.

In “Art of the Device,” Shklovsky dissects and critiques Potebnya, one of the founders and proponents of Symbolism, and his conclusions on imagery and artistry. Shklovsky argues that Potebnya saw only one type of imagery where Shklovsky believes two imageries exist. For Shklovsky, practical imagery and poetic imagery connect to the commonplace or practical language and the literary or poetic language. While the practical imagery “is a tool of abstraction,” the poetic image “is an instrument of the poetic language” (Shklovsky 3). Arguing that poetic imagery “is one of the means a poet delivers his greatest impact” (3), he notes a divergence lies between practical imagery and poetic imagery in the “economy of creative effort.” People have used the same images that previous generations have and in doing so these images become easier and easier for people to understand, comprehend, and take in. Thus, Shklovsky argues people economically assimilate the images and expend the least effort to comprehending for the best results. This economized automatization offers an easier time of reading the images and leads to wording eventually evolving into what Shklovsky sees as truncated. “It is this process of automatization that explains laws of our prose speech with its fragmentary phrases and half-articulated words” (5). Decades before texting, hashtags, and Twitter, Shklovsky argued that this automatization made a person able to absorb more, but understand less, “objects are grasped spatially, in the blink of an eye. We do not see them, we merely recognize them by their primary characteristics” (5). Shklovsky sees the merits of understanding practical language quickly, yet he asserts that art – poetic language – makes things new, “The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition” (6). In using defamiliarization, an author can create this “sight.” Shklovsky defines defamiliarization as a means in which

...an artifact has been removed from the domain of automatized perception. It is “artificially” created by an artist in such a way that the perceiver, pausing in his reading, dwells on the text. This is when the literary work attains its greatest and most long-lasting impact. The object is perceived not spatially but, as it were, in temporal continuity. That is, because of this device, the object is brought into view. (12)

Shklovsky points out various methods of defamiliarizing things, through unnamings, decontextualizing, non-recognition, constructions, riddles, and more. Shklovsky finds the overall purpose of these images not revolving around symbolism as Potebnaya would assert, but “to lead us to a ‘vision’ of this object rather than mere recognition” (10). Defamiliarization then circles around actually and vividly seeing something new through guidance from the author. In essence, because of defamiliarization, the object is brought into *new*. Through the use of this device, the poetic imagery becomes less truncated and, instead, can seem burdensome. It takes an active reader to comprehend a piece of literature instead of a passive reader with automatized practical language. This device stands as formalistic in every sense. To pinpoint defamiliarization, a scholar must focus first on the text and parse it intently. Broader applications of defamiliarization result in comparative studies of multiple texts and linguistic parsing. Today, new studies look at defamiliarization from many angles and approaches: historical studies have contextualized Shklovsky and defamiliarization (Tihanov; Boym), scholars bridged defamiliarization to Kant and alienation (Holquist and Klinger), and distancing and Bahktin (Emerson). In addition, scholars have devoted attention biblical analyses

(Bogdanov). Defamiliarization inevitably has become a device that scholars of today find worthy of further analysis and application, because of the renewed interest in Formalist theory.

Defamiliarization directs this analysis and establishes a Formalist basis for the argument. With the framing of Formalism, I analyze the sociolinguistics of *LHD* by closely analyzing shifgrethor as defamiliarization. Although at times this novel-centric analysis does edge near making assumptions about authorial intent and reader emotions, the objective of this analysis centers on examining nuances developed in *LHD* through a close reading. The text drives this analysis because of the Formalism theory employed. I use Formalism as a foundational framework for my analysis both in order to analyze the text through supporting my claims with a multiplicity of close parsings along with previous scholars' research. In the ensuing pages, I offer a working definition of shifgrethor, developed from the novel itself, and argue that shifgrethor presents itself as a theme by binding together all elements of *LHD*. In this way, shifgrethor offers readers a vision of the novel and insights into the novel not previously perceived.

ii. **THEME**

Russian Formalists appropriated their initial concepts of *theme*, *plot*, and *motif* from the analyses of Alexander Veselovsky, a literary historian, who wanted to mutually include *plot* as a construct of *theme*. Veselovsky equated *plot* to *theme* and defined *motif* as “words or word-combinations” and as the “simplest narrative unit” found in a piece of literature (Erllich 29). Russian Formalists utilized *plot* as a construct of literary devices and *motif* became known as the overarching term of these literary devices (Lemon and Reis xii). Yet *motif* also gained connotations of ideas, “of the irreducible part of a work”

(Tomashevsky 67). *Theme*, for Russian Formalists, differed from Veselovsky's analyses and came to represent "what was being said in a work" which came out of unifying all the elements of a novel (Tomashevsky 65). While Russian Formalist, Boris Tomashevsky, connects *theme* to reader emotion, authorial intent, and historical contextualization. He sees analyses of literary works possible without them by focusing on the literary devices that build a theme. While a catalogue of the literary devices and elements that comprise a theme go unlisted in Formalism, recent definitions of *theme*, outside of the formal Formalist texts, offer such a benefit.

Possibly the most comprehensive and detailed definition of theme may come from the 3rd edition of *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, in which Michael Meyer addresses theme and explains that it comprises the principal idea of a work and, "provides the unifying point around which the plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols and other elements of a story are organized" (199). Meyer adds that *themes* are, "a means of clarifying our thinking about what we've read and probably felt intuitively" (202). In Meyer's definition of *theme*, his wording almost exactly matches Formalist principles and additionally offers a framework to determine theme in a novel. Significantly, this framework leaves one essential point out of an argument for *theme*. Formalists argued that theme creates an argument made out of the novel. Another well-known work adds to this framework to create a comprehensive definition of theme. In the *Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, Ross C. Murfin and Supryia M. Ray defined theme as "not simply the subject of a literary work, but rather a statement that the text seems to be making about that subject" (400). Here, Murfin and Ray offer a rich element of theme that aligns with Formalist theory. In compiling these authoritative,

encyclopedic glossaries and their expositions of *theme* by focusing on the Formalist underpinnings, a complete definition of *theme* offers itself to an analysis of the term in a novel. For purposes of this analysis, the working definition of *theme* stems from Formalist principles and the offered framework by Michael Meyer enhanced by the addition of Murfin and Rey. *Theme*, thus, is the principal idea of a work that plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements hinge upon and that also makes a point about the text as a whole. In using the seven elements of theme, my analysis offers an essential Formalist argument for shifgrethor as unifying theme.

IV. ANALYSIS

i. WORKING DEFINITION OF SHIFGRETHOR

In arguing *shifgrethor* as *theme*, it behooves a scholar to offer a definition of the term. Yet, this task proves difficult. As previously intimated, this device is no mere neologistic triviality. *Shifgrethor* often appears full of subtle and perplexing nuances that reveal themselves to readers over the course of the entire novel. These subtleties can easily be overlooked and often have been. One reason many scholars have passed over *shifgrethor* in analyses may derive from the main characters' incomprehension of the device. The main character, Genly Ai, often shortened to Genly, defines the term as "prestige, face, place, the pride-relationship, the untranslatable and all-important principle of social authority in Karhide and all civilizations on Gethen" (14). Yet, Genly offers this definition directly before he explains his perplexity of the device, "And if it was, I would not understand it" (14). As such, readers cannot fully trust Genly's expositions of *shifgrethor* because of his confusion. Furthermore, his bafflement may

leave readers with incomprehension of their own in the device. Yet, the pervasiveness of shifgrethor makes avoiding the term, as a reader, difficult. Le Guin used the term at least thirty times and indirectly referenced it on nearly every page of *LHD*. Viewed primarily out of the narrations of Genly and Therem Harth rem ir Estraven, these characters offer two very different viewpoints. While Genly proves himself confused with shifgrethor, he presents readers with comments that describe the effects and results of the term. In these descriptions, readers can find an intended trustworthy report. Harth rem ir Estraven, shortened as Estraven, in comparison, understands and uses the device, yet he rarely contemplates the term. In Estraven, readers find a character who embodies the effects of shifgrethor, and as a native Gethenian readers can trust his explanations and nuanced applications of the term. These two main characters give readers differing views of shifgrethor and illuminate Le Guin's device.

Stemming “from an old word for shadow” (247) as N.B. Hayles and George Edgar Slusser noted in their summations of the device, shifgrethor penetrates all communications in *LHD* (Cummins, Slusser, and Spivack). Even Genly, who does not understand the term, speaks with shifgrethor's presence in conversations. Readers find Genly attempting to speak plainly with Harth rem ir Tibe, shortened as Tibe, and finding all his words gaining new meanings (Le Guin 8-9). As a conversational device, shifgrethor affects all Gethenian social and political relationships (Slusser, Spivack). However, Genly and Estraven often refer to the device in terms of competition (Le Guin 15, 19, 34, 83, 105, 106) where Gethenians can “duel” (34) or play (105,106, 156, 198) the “game” (19). Additionally, Ong Tot Oppong, one of the first Ekumenical investigators, used the word “game” in her scientific report to refer to the conversational

dynamics between human females and males. Through the only two usages of the word, Le Guin parallels Gethenian conversation with that of male and female social exchanges. While Gethenians cannot play the “game” between males and females because of their ambisexuality, the way Gethenians play the “game” paired with Genly’s and Estraven’s descriptions of shifgrethor reflect the real life social dynamics analyzed by sociolinguist Deborah Tannen.

Deborah Tannen, a linguistics professor at Georgetown University, wrote the highly respected, popularized study entitled *You Just Don’t Understand* that dives into the interplay found in communication between men and women. In this *New York Times* bestseller, Tannen explains the differences in how men and women perceive communication. Men, Tannen asserts, find conversations as a way to report, to achieve superiority, or to maintain their station; while women see conversation as a way to find rapport and belonging. While Gethenians are not simply men or women, they do perceive conversations as competitive duels that produce winners and losers as seen through the various descriptions with competitive connotations (15, 19, 34, 83, 105, 106). In Tannen’s research she analyzes men and women in respect to how and why they speak. Tannen believes that men and women inherently see the world in different ways. Men see the world as a hierarchical order where independence and difference determine status, while women see the world as a continual attempt at kinship with others through sameness (24-25, 58-61). While *LHD* has only one gender, Tannen’s research in the hierarchical social order of men helps to clarify much about the inner workings of shifgrethor. In her research, Tannen explores one-upmanship, or taking a superior position over another, through some sort of skill or intellect and speech acts like telling

stories or giving advice (77). She notes that men often see the world as, “an individual in a hierarchical social order in which he [is] either one-up or one-down. In this world, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from others’ attempts to put them down and push them around” (Tannen 24-25). In much the same way as Tannen’s common man, Gethenians see conversation as duels that create higher shifgrethor or lower shifgrethor. When Genly speaks with King Argaven XV, also known as King Argaven, and flatters him, “You’re a sovereign, my lord. Your peers on the Prime World of Ekumen wait for a word from you” (38), King Argaven becomes visibly upset and the situation perplexes Genly. With this dialogue Genly puts himself in a position to judge the King and this judging “frames the speaker as one-up” (Tannen 69) and puts the listener in a one-down position which results in Genly questioning the shifgrethor of the king. Genly implies he has the authority to judge the sovereignty of the king and also the authority to equate the king’s sovereignty to the Ekumen. Tannen labels such meanings implied by the dialogue as *metamessages* (32-33). Because Genly does not understand the metamessages he sends to others when speaking, he often finds communicating with others a difficult task. But metamessages occur with the help of more than just the dialogue as Tannen argues *how* a person speaks also creates metamessages, “how comments are worded, in what tone of voice they are spoken, accompanied by what facial expressions and gestures all determine the impression made “(32). In *LHD*, the way a person speaks similarly affects shifgrethor. Readers find an example of this when Estraven angrily tells Genly what to do and later reflects upon the conversation, “he seemed to *accept* my advice despite the manner of its giving” (150-151). Because Estraven communicates angrily in this instance

the overall message of what he spoke changed metamessages. Shifgrethor at this point has gained another aspect in definition that of affecting all exchange including what a person says and how a person says it. It offers a framework through one-upmanship for Gethenian actions and dialogue in Gethenian-to-Gethenian and nation-to-nation levels.

While readers find shifgrethor primarily played out at the Gethenian-to-Gethenian level, readers also find shifgrethor played on a larger scale at the nation-to-nation level through one-upping in land-grabs (48), uses of technology (85), uses of people (273, 258), and even in nations' ritualized and routinized uses of shifgrethor. While Karhide openly accepts their use of shifgrethor, Orgoreyn openly disdains it and sees it as filled with metaphors (86). In this response to shifgrethor, Orgoreyn asserts their superior direct speech. At a Gethenian-to-Gethenian level, readers find Estraven writing about waiving shifgrethor when he contemplates his relationship with Commensal Obsle. Estraven states, "He has some pleasure in my company (as I in his), and several times has waived shifgrethor and frankly asked my advice" (155). By setting aside the guiding principles that assert authority, independence, and status, a person can find the opposite of that in a conversation, more akin to what Tannen sees women find from conversation: kinship and closeness (Tannen 25). Similar to the Gethenian-to-Gethenian level result of waiving shifgrethor, at the nation-to-nation level, Orgota directness implies closeness similar to that found with Estraven and Commensal Obsle. Yet Orgoreyn uses this closeness to their advantage. In waiving shifgrethor, Orgoreyn and Orgota can give a Gethenian a false feeling of familiarity and a sense of freedom in speech, as though they stand among friends, but when Genly speaks candidly to the Orgota Commissioners and Commensals, he soon finds himself imprisoned (166). The Orgota nation deceptively uses shifgrethor

by waiving the device creating a false sense of closeness, yet the nation still relies on metamessages in communication. While Genly believed the Orgota to not use shifgrethor, he notes that Commissioner Shusgis as “a hard shrewd jovial politician, whose acts of kindness serves his interest and whose interest was himself” (118). Readers additionally find Orgota often needing to waive shifgrethor (84, 86, 155) implying in itself that shifgrethor occurs in Orgoreyn. The metamessages implied through the waiving of shifgrethor indicate that shifgrethor can at times act as a detriment to conversation and hinder relationships as it leaves users seeming aloof and devious.

Unlike Genly, Estraven can well use shifgrethor and understands the metamessages and one-upping within it. When Estraven and Genly traveled together over the Gobrin Ice and find themselves waiting out a blizzard, Estraven explains to Genly how to use shifgrethor appropriately with the king when they return to Karhide. He dictates a possible occurrence with Karhide and Orgoreyn where Karhide can successfully one-up Orgoreyn by proving that nation as liars. In this scenario, he tells Genly to take advantage of the new found friendship between Genly and the king, found through this one-upping, and to “bring your people to Karhide and accomplish your mission at once” (258). By applying Tannen’s concept of oneupsmanship to Estraven’s plan, readers can see how Genly will be able to persuade the king to accept entry into the Ekumen by using the king’s high status against him. By not asking for permission to bring down further Ekumenical allies, Genly forces the king to extend his offering of friendship to the Ekumen as otherwise Karhide would see the king unaware of the impending arrivals and lose status because of Genly. Because the King will not want to lose shifgrethor, he will oblige Genly and enter into friendship with the Ekumen. By

extending Karhide's acceptance of the Ekumen before Orgoreyn, King Argaven will also prove his country has one-upped the other (258). In the instructions in how to force King Argaven's hand, Estraven shows readers an excellent example of how to play shifgrethor in nation-to-nation and world-to-world levels with actions. Readers can see shifgrethor through this example and previous examples as a guiding principle for actions and communications. Making an action *means* something, speaking *means* something, just as not speaking and not acting also mean something.

Tannen explains that metamesages fill the withholding of speech just as much as research finds them in speaking. Men can use "silence as a weapon" when speaking with women because women find conversation as a way to bond and create intimacy (Tannen, 23). When a man deliberately chooses not to speak and withdraws from conversation when a person wishes to speak with him, the metamesages imply his hostility to the situation and person (229-231). When Estraven expresses to Genly that his position with the king has changed, he first asks if Genly had seen the king speak with Estraven earlier in the day at the parade and keystone ceremony. When Genly answered "No," Estraven received his reply as a confirmation of understanding and needed additional prodding from Genly for more explanation (14). By the king choosing not to speak with Estraven in public during the festivities, the metamesages implied the king felt disapproval toward Estraven. The public non-action and non-dialogue of the king one-downed Estraven and his shifgrethor fell. Similarly, in Estraven, readers find a character who often does not speak. Genly refers to Estraven's quietness often as he characterizes him with an "effeminate deviousness" (14) and "broods" (16) and pauses before and after speaking in many of the conversations he holds with Genly. When introducing Estraven,

Genly notes that the Gethenian speaks, “frank yet cautious” (5) and Genly often describes Estraven filled with silence. Readers find that “Estraven did not answer for a while” (18), and then “broke off” when speaking (19). Later, Estraven just “stopped” while yelling at Genly, and later yet readers find him lengthily contemplating the yin-yang sign before speaking (267). Yet Estraven does not wield his silence often as a weapon. Instead, Estraven sees conversation imbued with meaning. Tannen notes that a man who does not speak his inner thoughts explained that he supposed “speaking them would give them more weight and significance” (83). In a world where all dialogue and action have metamessages associated to them, Estraven understands that words have power and speaking may hinder his own or someone else’s shifgrethor. While he often speaks cautiously, Estraven avoided one-upping Genly at the parade in the opposite fashion that King Argaven did with Estraven: by speaking to him publicly. Unlike King Argaven, who publicly shunned Estraven, Estraven walks with Genly in the parade and makes sure to speak with him around other Gethenians (4-6, 8). Genly even notes that Tibe overheard some of their conversation and explains, “I felt that he was meant to overhear” (8). Estraven, as a native Gethenian, understands the complexity of shifgrethor on Gethen and in this, he knows that his speaking to another casts shifgrethor. By publicly speaking with Genly at the parade, Estraven overtly expresses to all through metamessages that he has befriended Genly. For Estraven, shifgrethor is a tool that can gain the upper hand or persuade through one-upping and public snubbing, yet he often maintains his shifgrethor and others’ by choosing his words with care.

In how shifgrethor establishes metamessages and in what it affects in Gethenian civilization, the term offers a framework that at times seems restrictive. Genly notes this

impediment when finally understanding shifgrethor while on the icy adventure from Orgoreyn to Karhide, “Now that the barriers were down, the limitation, in my terms, of our converse and understanding seemed intolerable to me” (249). In addition, Estraven also notes how the use of shifgrethor interferes with him from saying certain things, “My greatest error was, as you say, in making myself clear to you. I am not used to doing so. I am not used to giving, or accepting, either advice or blame” (198). Furthermore, while King Argaven can give advice freely because he has such a vast amount of shifgrethor, Estraven cannot and when he does, he apologizes liberally (258, 259). In a larger context, shifgrethor also restrains the Gethenian people as a whole. In *LHD*, Genly writes that shifgrethor helps to control and offers an outlet for “emotions of a more elemental, uncontrollable kind” (102). Charlotte Spivack argues in her brief synopsis of shifgrethor that the “natural competitiveness of the inhabitants is channeled into shifgrethor ” (51). Shifgrethor then affects all communications and interactions in the novel and involves understanding the metamessages and further establishes a type of framework in social and political spheres which guides the speaker and sets up a context in which one speaker understands the status of another through their actions and dialogue.

At the very core of shifgrethor lies yet another nuance of the term alluded to by Spivack when she writes about the “natural competitiveness” of Gethenians. “An Orgota Creation Myth” gives the origin story of all Gethenians in the Handarra religion and also gives a potential history of shifgrethor. In it, “ice-shapes” (237) create thirty-nine men from soil and seawater. When the ice-shapes melted, their liquid poured into the men’s mouths and they slowly started to wake up. The first to awaken, Edondurath, became frightened of the others and killed all but two. As one escaped and Edondurath chased

him down to eventually kill him, the last fled. Then Edondurath built a home from the dead bodies and when he went into kemmering the last man came and they joined in kemmer (237-239). Their children carried a shadow because “they were born in the house of flesh, therefore death follows at their heels” (239). Le Guin used the term “shadow” forty-two times in *LHD* and she uses the term in relation to shifgrethor, imagery, and in this Handarra myth. Her confined use of the term—in context—gives a plausible conclusion that this myth presents the original root of shifgrethor. Therefore, this pre-Yomesh text gives readers a backstory to shifgrethor and the nature of the Gethenian people.

Gethenians’ innate nature aligns them to fear and death and this “original sin,” or ancestral sin, shadows the Gethenian people and has pursued each Gethenian since the creation of the world. Contrasting the Handarra myth is the Yomesh myth “On Time and Darkness” that argues with the Handarra myth and further constructs shifgrethor. In it, Meshe, the Yomesh god, walks through the Ornen Forest and specifically removed an old and large tree’s only shadowed and secret leaf, which the tree kept for himself (163).

Later the myth recounts, “there is neither darkness nor death, for all things are, in the light of the Moment, and their end and their beginning are one” (164). A footnote tells readers that the darkness means the Handarra and readers can easily see the shadowed leaf that the large tree wanted to keep to itself as the shadow of the ancestral sin. The tree, then, becomes a metaphor for a Gethenian who wants to keep his ancestral sin a secret. In this way, the restrictive aspects of shifgrethor hide parts of Gethenians from others.

While ancestral sin attached shifgrethor to Gethenians and their actions further elongate it, Shifgrethor offers Gethenians a way to hide parts of themselves.

In the North Karhidish tale of “The Place Inside the Blizzard,” two brothers broke societal norms and vowed kemmering to each other after conceiving a child. When their Lord demanded they break their vow, one brother killed himself and the land’s inhabitants blamed the other brother for the suicide. This brother became exiled and thrown out of his land and wandered the Pering Ice until, frostbitten and nearly dead, he met his dead brother inside a blizzard – a silent white world. The dead brother had “no longer any life in his belly” and he frightened the living brother who ran away. After the people of Orhoch hearth found and rehabilitated the brother far from his home, the brother denied who he was. He denied his shadow—his shifgrethor—until he became old and found his old land in distress. By taking back his name and his shadow, his land regained prosperity—even after his death (22-26). In this short myth, readers see shifgrethor as the shadow and the abstract ethereal name cast aside and then donned again in the end. This myth conveys another degree of shifgrethor that fully forms a person’s essence. Without shifgrethor, a Gethenian is not a complete person. Genly notes how the Orgota “lacked some quality, some dimension of being; and they failed to convince. They were not quite solid” (147). His description compares similarly to what the brother found in his dead brother in the previous tale. In this note, Genly hits on just what happens in pushing aside shifgrethor for too long. Even though Orgoreyn uses shifgrethor deceptively they lose some sense of being. In another example, Estraven, similar to the brothers in the myth, vowed a secret vow with his brother. In keeping this secret and making a second vow to Ashe, Estraven is weighed down by this loss of himself, “But my brother’s shadow followed me. I had done ill to speak of him” (75). His dead brother’s shadow falls upon him and implies that this has weighed down his own

shifgrethor in some way. By truly casting shifgrethor aside like the brother in the myth, a Gethenian casts aside that which makes him an individual and that which gives him authority, independence, and status; without shifgrethor a Gethenian no longer exists wholly. As a working definition in this analysis, Shifgrethor is a metaphysical life force of the Gethenians, deeply rooted in death, and gives them guiding and restrictive principles to establish societal order out of their innate tendency toward fear through one-upmanship in conversations and actions. It pervades the world of Gethen and touches not just in the visible conversations and actions of Gethenians, but also in larger concerns and with larger contexts such as relationships between countries and worlds. After establishing a definition of shifgrethor through a textual analysis, delving into the device as a theme offers readers a pathway lit by Le Guin that leads to an overall brighter understanding of the novel.

ii. SHIFGRETHOR AS INTERPRETIVE THEME

Ursula K. Le Guin created a blueprint to read *The Left Hand of Darkness* through using shifgrethor as defamiliarization. Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarization takes a thing – an object, device, concept – and makes it strange (Shklovsky 12). Shklovsky argued that the strangeness found through this process avoids automatization and forces readers to stop and mull items over with guidance from the author (12). In *LHD*, Le Guin takes the basic concept of communication – something that anyone could easily overlook by mere use of it in the everyday. Words, thus, become more than mere words as indirect markers of moves in the cultural ritual of playing shifgrethor. Basic conversations become something new. Everywhere communication resides becomes different and new because communication is no longer just direct communication: it is shifgrethor. This

defamiliarization alters the meaning of all words spoken and used in the novel. Le Guin makes dialogue so strange, it has the power to influence daily lives, kings, countries, and even the essence of individuals. Through defamiliarization, Le Guin forces readers to focus on the communications in the novel, not because she renames it *shifgrethor*, but because she enhances the term and creates “non-recognition” (Shklovsky).

As a concept that encompasses all aspects of Gethenian society from the concrete interactions a person makes to the abstract concepts offered in the religious underpinnings, *shifgrethor* makes even simple communication confusing for Genly. In the first encounter Genly has with Tibe (Harth rem ir Tibe), he concludes his own speech takes on new meanings, “I was trying to speak insipidly, yet everything I said to Tibe seemed to take on a double meaning” (9). Genly later, when speaking with Estraven (Harth rem ir Estraven), finds that signals and indirectness comprise the conversation (14, 19). When Genly speaks with King Argaven XV, readers find another instance of his confusion. In this example, however, readers see Genly incapable of communicating that he simply wanted to speak straightforwardly, “that I was not dueling with Argaven, but trying to communicate with him, was itself an incommunicable fact” (34). Readers find that Genly has come to Gethen studied up on Gethenian languages and other information (28, 38, 56). Genly should know how to communicate well as any prepared envoy, however, the examples elaborate the redefined communication of *shifgrethor*. Furthermore, Genly offers readers a perspective of an outsider on Gethen and all his descriptions of the concept of *shifgrethor* allow readers to see his experiences as new. Shklovsky offered non-recognition was a way to defamiliarize concepts through an author writing about something as if it had never been seen before (Shklovsky 11-12).

While Genly understands communication and conversations, because Le Guin has enhanced the term of shifgrethor to mean more than just dialogue and interactions, she creates a new type of non-recognition. As readers see much of the novel from the perspective of Genly – an outsider – what he sees and comprehends of shifgrethor appears new. Le Guin uses shifgrethor as more than a simple enhanced device and she hinges all elements – plot, characters, setting, point of view, symbols, and other elements – upon it and offers readers a concluding statement about the term. In this way, Le Guin guides readers to view shifgrethor as a persistent and coherent overall theme of *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

Genly's journey over the course of the novel comprises the plot in a broad sense and a specific one. Broadly, the plot of *LHD* deals with the envoy who comes to Gethen to connect the world with the Ekumen, but more specifically, the plot involves the building of a relationship between Genly and Estraven. Genly and Estraven start out the novel on unsteady ground, where Estraven tries to help Genly as much as he can – even to the detriment of himself – but, Genly believes Estraven to have lied to and manipulated him. The plot twists in the novel result from the communication difficulties Genly has with Estraven.

When Genly and Estraven meet for dinner, much confusion clouds their exchange. Estraven tries to explain that he believes in Genly's cause (12-13), but doing so frankly would involve one-upping Genly by expressing a notion that Estraven believes has clearly been made. Genly, however, does not understand the metamessages behind his comments and becomes confused. He instead believes that Estraven is "faithless" and "withdrawing his support" (13). Estraven again tries to impress upon Genly that, although

he believes in his cause, he has fallen out of favor with the King and can no longer help him (13-14). Yet, Genly doesn't understand the implications of Estraven's speech and the conversation leaves Genly feeling deflated and saddened (20-21). The result of their incomprehension with each other has Genly ineffectually speaking with the king (31-40) and continuing onto Orgoreyn where another faulty conversation leads the two characters into even more conflict.

In Orgoreyn, readers find another conversation between Genly and Estraven that leads to a disastrous miscommunication. When Genly gives Estraven money sent from Estraven's kemmering, Estraven tries to explain the dishonesty rampant in Orgoreyn politics, "One can't believe everything one hears on that radio, here [...] Yet it seems to me that here in Mishnory you are going to be in some need of information, and advice" (131). While Estraven tries to imply Orgoreyn is not trustworthy, he also offers that Genly does not have all of the knowledge that he needs at this time. While this blatant advice giving and one-upping would offend the average Gethenian, Genly is not a Gethenian and does not understand the mistreatment, "I had never heard him use this sort of harsh, elaborate courtesy, and had no idea what it signified" (132). Similar to Genly's confusion, Estraven also finds confusion in the encounter,

He knew I was angry but I am not sure he understood that he was being insulted; he seemed to *accept* my advice despite the manner of its giving; and when my temper cooled I saw this, and was worried about it. Is it possible that all along in Erhenrang he was seeking my advice, not knowing how to tell me that he sought it? If so, then he must have understood half and not understood the rest [...] (150-151)

Although Estraven can use shifgrethor effectively and, as a native-Gethenian, understands the subtleties of the device, because Genly is an alien and barely understands the basics of shifgrethor, any communication attempted by the two remains clouded. Yet these obstructions are what push the plot onward. In this case, the result of Genly misinterpreting Estraven's advice pushes him to speak openly to the Commensals and Commissioners about the Starship orbiting their sun (140) and become imprisoned (166). Without the impediments created by shifgrethor in *LHD*, there would be no story. Genly would have arrived on Gethen, met with the King, and carried out his mission, but instead the foggiess created by shifgrethor drive the story onward. The driving force of the plot is not simply communication because Le Guin uses defamiliarization in a sophisticated way by not just renaming a term, but by reworking communication into a more complex concept. Thus shifgrethor becomes a concept which stands apart from general conversation and truly becomes a unique device.

Shifgrethor is not only embedded in the overall plot of Gethen, but also intertwined with the characters of *LHD*. Further analysis of these characters, however, gives a deeper understanding of the depth of shifgrethor. Genly, for example, as an envoy needs to communicate with Gethenians to explain the Ekumen and to explore Gethen's feelings about such a connection. Without adequate communication, Genly cannot perform his function.. In Genly, Le Guin constructed a main character who serves as a guide for readers. Shklovsky explains that defamiliarization creates a burdened text as it forces a reader to actively pause and consider the defamiliarized concept (13). By writing Genly focused on his confusion with shifgrethor, Le Guin not only employs defamiliarization for the reader, but also for Genly. In this way, Le Guin helps to guide

readers to a fuller view of the text through the confusion of shifgrethor as defamiliarization shared between the reader and Genly. The text therefore points readers to shifgrethor from the start; yet, Le Guin does not conclude her use of shifgrethor in Genly there. The device often frames the appearances and descriptions of the characters through Genly's eyes.

When readers meet Estraven at the parade and subsequent keystone ceremony, Genly takes note of Estraven's speaking, "so he often speaks, frank yet cautious, ironic [...]" (5). Here Genly explores how Estraven speaks in a multifaceted way. Genly explains that Estraven is "frank," "cautious," and "ironic," which indicates some ironies in the description itself. How can a character be both frank and ironic? Yet this initial perception of the Gethenian is clearly indicative of the complexities of a society deeply entrenched in shifgrethor. Similar to Estraven, Genly describes Tibe by suggesting how many connotations the other evokes, "He smiled again, and every tooth seemed to have a meaning, double, multiple, thirty-two different meanings" (9). Genly does not suggest Tibe's smile and teeth produce these multiple meanings. In his description, Genly develops a depiction of Tibe as a person and the metamessages that are involved in everything he does. In another example, when Genly first meets King Argavan, he describes the encounter bathed in imagery of light and darkness, specifically shadows, which is indicative of shifgrethor. King Argaven has a "dark and featureless" (31) appearance initially and then his face is "cratered by firelight and shadow" (31). Soon, the King's "eyes glowed slightly orange" (32) and "the firelight" moved across his face (36), which he later labeled "shadow-scarred" (40). While the meeting occurred in a dark room lit by a firelight, the descriptions here involve more than the room's interaction

with the characters. Shifgrethor stems from shadow and it is a part of person, like a shadow. What Genly's description suggests then is that King Argaven has the highest shifgrethor as the descriptions literally bathe him in shadows. This imagery parallels Genly's comments about the King and shifgrethor, "he had a long practice in the evasions and challenges and rhetorical subtleties used in conversation by those whose main aim in life was the achievement and maintenance of the shifgrethor relationship on a high level" (33-34). King Argaven plays on the highest levels of shifgrethor and his time spent dueling has scarred him. Shifgrethor frames much of Genly's descriptions of the Gethenians he meets in *LHD*, further solidifying the importance of the device. Furthermore, the device also actively encourages the characters as previously seen in the case of Genly, and readers can also find this in Estraven.

Readers see Estraven as a character built out of reaction. At times, Estraven's reactions come in the form of clarifications as seen in the first dinner with Estraven and Genly shown to readers in which Estraven explains his falling out with the King to Genly.

"Did you hear what the king said to me at the ceremony today?"

"No."

In telling Genly that the King has neglected him at the public function, Estraven's metessages tell Genly that he no longer advises the King, yet, Genly does not follow. Estraven tries two more times to explain to no avail (14-15). In the miscommunications, shifgrethor impedes Estraven's intentions, which often result in further necessary reactions from Estraven. When Genly is in trouble, Estraven always attempts to help him. When Genly wanted passage into Orgoreyn, Estraven spoke with his commensal

associates to persuade them to do so (150) and Estraven continually attempted to convince the Orgota to believe in Genly and to follow through with his work (150, 155, 160). On a grander scale, when Genly is imprisoned, Estraven plots and succeeds in breaking him out (184-192). While these events of course help shape the plot, they also exemplify how deeply rooted in shifgrethor the character of Estraven is. He reacts because of shifgrethor, but he also reacts in shifgrethor.

In many cases, Estraven serves to inform the reader of the constrictions and impediments of shifgrethor and not just because Genly cannot understand him. While the King, with his high shifgrethor, can hand out advice easily. Estraven cannot. Tannen explains that the action of giving advice one-ups the person to whom the advice is given, because by giving the information, the person assumes a knowledgeable position over the other (Tannen, 53). Therefore, only a person of high shifgrethor would be able to give advice without demeaning herself or himself—by faultily assuming superiority—or by lowering another in shifgrethor. Estraven finds himself restricted in what he can and cannot freely say without innuendos and framing the wording in contexts of what-ifs. Estraven cannot advise Genly, even though Genly relies upon Estraven as an advisor and counselor throughout the novel. Even the simple task of offering information is difficult for Estraven, because having information and giving it to someone who lacks it “sends a metamessage of superiority” (Tannen 62). Estraven believes in Genly. He believes in his story, believes his cause, and he often does not want to insult Genly and assume the superior position over him in shifgrethor. Readers find an example of this when Genly asks Estraven if he has just told him something and Estraven becomes visibly upset, “I’m not trying to tell you anything, Mr. Ai” (14). Readers find Estraven consumed by

reactions because of and in shifgrethor. Shifgrethor touches all characters in the novel, either through framing or through their actions done in shifgrethor. Genly and Estraven describe much of the intermingling notes of shifgrethor. Estraven and Genly, for instance, elaborate on shifgrethor when they describe the surroundings in imagery associated to the device.

The setting itself creates a larger landscape of shifgrethor through imagery of light and dark and inherent shadows. Genly describes the countryside of Karhide marked by foothills, summits, and mountains with white peaks (50). He writes of the “vague lands blurred with clouds and shadows of clouds and streaked with silver of rivers [...]” (53) and the “fog-hidden hills and beaches” (99). Among the landscape reside cities like Otherhord, Rer, and Erhenrang. Genly describes Otherhord as a village under the “shadow of that slanting forest” (55) and “secretive, peaceful, rural” (55). He finds the village random and winding, where “everything was red and brown, dank, still, fragrant, gloomy” (57). In Rer, Genly finds a mash of tunnels and walkways and roofs without streets (53). The descriptions Genly gives readers evoke a maze that changes with the seasons and twists into and out of itself. In the summer Rer has walkways, in the winter there are tunnels and burrows, and in the spring: canals (53). The jumbled mass, Genly writes, contains the inn he stays at, which is a “dreary overpriced inn crouching in the lee of the towers” (54). The descriptions of Otherhord produce a lightly shadowed, peaceful village while the images of Rer evoke such a heap of tunnels and walkways that a reader cannot but see the light hampered through the stone walls and rooftops and seeping lightly down through the town. In contrast, however, Genly describes the capital city of Erhenrang deeply enshrouded in light imagery. Genly describes the city with “Rainclouds

over dark towers, rain falling in deep streets, a dark storm-beaten city of stone [...]” (2). The town seems literally created of protrusions and recesses of darkness. These varying descriptions indicate levels of shifgrethor for these cities. While Rer initially housed the Kings of Karhide, they left the city behind and as such it has lost much of its shifgrethor. In Otherhord we find similar yet less randomness, but we find more shadow descriptions. These shadows imply higher shifgrethor than found in Rer. In Karhide, however, the shadows are endless as even the tall spires of buildings appear darkened. Karhide is the capital city where King Argaven resides in his palace and, as such, has much more political sway, much more social power, and much more shifgrethor.

Contrasting the ups and downs of Karhide is Orgoreyn where Genly finds “vast, straight-furrowed grainlands, under an even gray sky” (114). The capital city, Mishnory, is described not in shadows but in ordered indulgence. The windows are “too high,” the street lamps set on “ridiculous tall posts” (115). The houses sit high above the ground and are “aimless.” Genly sees the city as “an ill proportioned, grotesque city, in the sunlight” (115). Yet for all of this height, Genly finds no darkness or shadows. He finds only the sun bathing the city in light. Genly finds the comparison between Mishnory and Erhenrang striking, “Mishnory was cleaner, larger, lighter than Erhenrang, more open and imposing” (115). He feels that Mishnory has “no sense of always being under the shadow of something high and gloomy, as in Erhenrang” (115). The difference between the two countries and the two capital cities is well worth noting. While Karhide and Erhenrang are bathed in darkness and shadows because of its multitudes of mountains and dark buildings, Orgoreyn and Mishnory rest under the sunlight in flat plains and large opulence. The difference in descriptions parallel the differences found in how the

countries use shifgrethor. While the Karhide nation openly uses it, Orgoreyn disdains it. Instead of openly using shifgrethor, Orgoreyn deceptively uses it by waiving it and creating an atmosphere of openness, much like how Genly has described the city. The city is a deception created from the jutting of opulent buildings that have no shadows in the sun and it is a stark contrast to the world outside of this deceptive city where Genly becomes imprisoned in total darkness. Without proper papers before Genly arrives in Mishnory, he finds a foreshadowing of darkness in the short scuffle between Karhide and Orgoreyn in a border town. Genly finds dark and bursts of light, but here they are not angles of the sun hitting Karhidish faces or buildings, but explosions from inside the burning town. Genly describes the “cold, dark country silence” (110) before he is found and thrust into a dark barn where he and others were kept “in that hollow, huge, dusty blindness” (111). The complete darkness lasts longer when the Orgota government imprisons Genly. Confined, Genly finds himself “locked in the dark” in a windowless vehicle where “darkness was total inside our steel box”(168). The shifgrethor waived off in the capital city of Mishnory and in the Orgota government shade the rest of the Orgota countryside, for they cannot fully rid themselves of shifgrethor as it makes up a deep part of them. From the complete darkness of the vehicle, Genly is pushed into a setting of complete light in the Orgota prison where he works in the day and at night sleeps in a completely lit room. Yet even in the light shadows can be found. Genly, speaking with an old dying man in the dormitory, notes that “the silence and the shadow hung around us” (183). While the majority of the time the prisoners at Pulefen Farm live without their identities – unable to claim their shifgrethor –there are no shadows except off in the distance. But, when Genly and the old man speak, shadows are found as identities are

claimed, pasts are remembered, and shifgrethor is donned. The device makes up a part of the Gethenian nations as much as it does a part of Gethenian people.

The setting – that of the snowy wilderness – while traveling after the prison, often parallels the relationship between Genly and Estraven in the weather. Genly notes at one point, “It was blind dark outside” (212). This description parallels Genly and Estraven’s conversation where they speak of friends and Genly feels detached and distant from Estraven (212-213). Shifgrethor blinds Genly as he sees only an alien in front of him and not a friend, even while the two say goodnight using personal first names (213). When their relationship develops, the weather changes. As it snows around Estraven and Genly while they move closer to the Gobrin Ice, Estraven notes the “overcast” weather and says later that it was “dark as late twilight all day” (229). In this gray, Estraven and Genly creep slowly toward the Ice, sleeping much, and speaking little, but their relationship matures: they no longer reside in the dark. Now, readers find Estraven discovering subtle pieces of Genly. Estraven ponders about Genly crying (229), about his impatience (230), and about his “pure pleasure in our achievement” (230). Genly finds “joy” in his experiences during this time with Estraven even as he also often becomes frustrated with Estraven’s want to keep him alive (245). In this grey, the two aliens are equally alone and becoming equals. But, the weather starts shifting from grey to a white world where the white of the sky meets the white of the snow and shadows do not fall (243).

The shifting occurs as Genly has found a better understanding of shifgrethor but both of the characters still hold back from each other. This time their lack of communication results from their budding relationship and emotions. Genly notes that “A profound love between two people involves, after all, the power and chance of doing

profound hurt” (249). This grey and at times shifting background offers the characters and the plot a place to culminate where shadows are not as striking, where the light and the darkness do not battle but blend. It is here that Genly and Estraven cast away the pretenses and the secrets of shifgrethor through mindspeech. Through mindspeech, Estraven’s shadow bleeds its darkness and they speak not framed by shifgrethor but entirely by truth. The weather soon parallels Genly and Estraven’s climactic communication through becoming what Estraven calls the, “unshadow” (261). This place made of white and completely shadowless, parallels the completely truthful communication occurring between the two characters, through mindspeech. But, just as Estraven struggles to find ways to keep portions of himself hidden from Genly (254) and Genly tries to find a more intimate communication with Estraven (255), readers watch the characters “groping” to find shadows for balance (261). Through paralleling the characters relationship, from blind to fully seeing each other, and in framing the world of Gethen in shifgrethor, Le Guin uses the various backgrounds of the novel to further illustrate the theme of shifgrethor.

Shifgrethor is a framework, a way to exchange, a guide for how to talk and what to say and what not to say. Furthermore, it is the past as much as it is the present. This multifaceted device is developed and paralleled through the alternating point of view. *LHD*’s complexity gives readers first person accounts, legends, myths, and tales. This epistolary form adds depth and realism to the novel. Readers find Genly Ai’s hand has written ten chapters, while Estraven has penned four, and Ong Tot Oppong, one of the first investigators, wrote one. But between chapters from the envoy, the Gethenian, and Ong, rest five legends and tales. The epistolary approach that Le Guin used in creating

LHD mimics the use of shifgrethor as a conversational device. Only one account cannot create a conversation, but multiple accounts can compete and duel. In Genly's and Estraven's accounts, readers have conflicting versions of events. The conversation between the two in the beginning of chapter ten is recounted from Estraven's perspective in chapter eleven. In Genly's account, he angrily handed Estraven Ashe's money and then, stupefied by Estraven's anger, listened as Estraven spoke to him. The event left Genly feeling confused about what Estraven had meant and feeling forlorn (133). In Estraven's version of events, Genly "gave me Ashe's money as one would give a hired assassin his fee" (150) and, while angered, Estraven "insulted him deliberately" (150). The conversation had Estraven considering Genly's shifgrethor and how much of his own speech Estraven had ever comprehended. While both characters recalled the same event, Genly saw Estraven as confusing and Estraven saw Genly as calculable, but both characters ponder the content of their conversation. While Estraven had clearly one-upped Genly in an attempt to insult him, Genly, later, read the conversation as a "warning" (165). The two versions have similarities and differences and these highlight for readers the conflict in the novel. Readers are able to comprehend and read firsthand the miscommunication between the two characters.

In another conflict of versions in chapters seventeen and eighteen, Estraven details his conversation with Genly about isolation, religion, kemmering, and sexes. Estraven is in kemmering and because of this he finds himself withdrawn until Genly questions him. Estraven finally explains his quietness with "embarrassment" (232), fearful that Genly would laugh, but Estraven notes that Genly spoke "with gentleness" (233). When Estraven later spoke the Tormer's Lay, his "voice shook" (234) as he

thought of his dead brother and then Estraven spontaneously questioned Genly about females and males and Genly “looked startled” and they both became uncomfortable (234). Eventually Genly “looked away and laughed, rueful and uneasy” (235), while Estraven pondered his own feelings. Yet in Genly’s account, the bulk of the night was spent speaking of shifgrethor and while Estraven felt himself out of control, Genly notes that he was stiff and spoke with “extreme restraint” (248). Genly notes that later they had spoken about females and males and it was hard for Genly to answer his questions. Even in this instance where Genly and Estraven comprehend each other better in the greying world as Genly has learned more about shifgrethor and Estraven has cast aside much of his, their accounts conflict in the details but also in their readings of the other’s actions. While Genly believes they spoke more about shifgrethor and kemmering, Estraven remembers little of shifgrethor and more about multiple genders. Additionally, while Estraven feels impulsive and out of control, Genly sees him as controlled and restrictive. These conflicting accounts give readers a sense of realism in the storyline and also in the characters, but they also act as dueling counterparts vying to be deemed more truthful and more knowledge-filled by readers. These chapters play shifgrethor just as they contain it.

Yet these chapters also produce a better understanding of shifgrethor in its entirety as these events are the history of Genly and Estraven. Shifgrethor has sewn these events into their pasts and as such they are a part of their shadows. By building a history of events of Genly and Estraven, each chapter develops a reader’s understanding of the shifgrethor attached to them. The ten chapters and four chapters written by Genly and Estraven respectively give readers an insight into the shifgrethor of the characters. The myths and legends and Ong’s account serve to fully develop that vision by diving into the

past of Gethen. “On Time and Darkness” gives readers an insight into the Yomesh religion and “An Orgota Creation Myth” offers the creation mythology of the Handdarra. Both of these myths give readers a deeper understanding of the Gethenians – a people struggling with shadows and light, with enduring the past and knowing all of time. At the core of the Gethenian religions resides striking conflicts and duels. With the Handdarra there was a beginning and there will be an end, but in the Yomesh there is all for eternity. The Yomesh myth also shows the beginnings of the shadow, the original shifgrethor, born out of death. Similarly, the Yomesh belief in “the sight of Meshe” (164) is also born out of death (60), yet Meshe denies a beginning, an end, and a shadow. These two creation myths one-up each other for superiority of truth – exactly what Genly aspires to find in conversation. Other chapters foreshadow events that will occur in later chapters. “The Place Inside the Blizzard” gives readers the hearth tale of the incestuous brothers four chapters before readers learn that Estraven had made a similar vow with his brother. The East Karhidish story of “The Nineteenth Day” reveals an experience with fastnesses that Genly will find, yet it also foreshadows the attention to death that Genly and Estraven have in the later chapters (220, 257). In another example, Ong Tot Oppong’s investigatory account of kemmering cycles foretells of the later conversation and difficulty that Genly and Estraven will encounter on the Ice when Estraven enters kemmering. Yet, this report also helps to develop the reader’s understanding of the Gethenian people as a whole and may remind readers of the differences between the people of Gethen and Genly. Similar to these examples, the East Karhidish tale of “Estraven the Traitor” serves to evoke memories and add onto the shadows of characters formed in a reader’s mind. This tale gives readers the Lord of Estre from Estraven’s own

clan. Readers learn about the original traitor who, even after his death and years later, still adds to Estraven's own shadow as his namesake. Readers find these chapters intermingle with each other, bathe each other in shadows, and reveal each other in light. These chapters attach themselves to characters, building a better concept of a character's shifgrethor as they also serve as a way to educate readers in this alien world.

Defamiliarization serves to make it strange so that readers actually critically think about the events. Through following the journey of Genly and reading the history of Gethen, readers learn about shifgrethor and develop a sense of the shifgrethor attached to the characters. As defamiliarization makes a concept strange, it is the author's job to guide how a reader is to see newly and comprehend the defamiliarized concept (Shklovsky 10). Le Guin gives readers the epistolary form therefore to guide readers in how they should interpret the texture of the imagery in the novel. As Genly comes to comprehend shifgrethor more, so too should readers. Throughout the epistolary narrative structure with its multiple points of view, a reader develops a sight of shifgrethor by developing a view of the shadows of the characters, the countries, even Gethen as a whole. Through the knowledge that readers build, shifgrethor comes into view.

The new vision of shifgrethor is continued in the symbols and other elements in *LHD* as Le Guin constructed the novel with a base of shifgrethor. The symbols present in *LHD* range from objects, to people, to places. Shifgrethor saturates these symbols, just as it suffuses each chapter. In the ansible, for example, readers find a portable communications device that connects directly to the Ekumen and can be used to send information and technologies from one place to another simultaneously (35, 138). But, to Genly, the ansible is more than just a piece of equipment that he operates, as he uses it as

undeniable proof of the truthfulness of his story in Karhide and Orgoreyn (35, 136, 138). However, readers also find Genly packs the device with his things and sleeps with it as a pillow (49). Additionally, this mass of items is what he clings to when he is awoken at the Orgoreyn border near Siuwensin (110). For Genly, the ansible evokes feelings of security and safety. When Genly first hears of Estraven's exile, he hastily thinks of using the ansible to signal for help (30). Although Genly pushes aside this thought, readers are left with the belief that the device brings feelings of protection from the Ekumen that it can connect. When the ansible is taken from Genly, readers find him left helpless and naked of Ekumenical support. For the first time without the ansible, Genly is both figuratively and physically naked (168). Shed of the support that he clung to, Genly needs to turn to Gethenians for support. The ansible parallels shifgrethor. While the ansible offers a way to communicate to the Ekumen and shifgrethor is a conversational device, both prevent Genly from communicating to the Gethenians. Instead of truly relying on Gethenians for support on Gethen, Genly cleaves onto the support of the Ekumen through the ansible. Only after Orgoreyn withholds the device from Genly do readers find the character trusting and understanding Estraven. Similarly, after Estraven casts off much of the outward uses of shifgrethor, Genly and Estraven's relationship can develop.

Shifgrethor can also be seen in the dueling natures in Gethenian religion, Gethenian physiology, and Ekumenical mindspeech. These elements build some of the framework for the Gethenian people, offer a history of shifgrethor, and include another communication tool used in the Ekumen. Each one adds to the overall view a reader has of shifgrethor and how to perceive it in the novel. The Gethenian religions, for instance give a history of shifgrethor and offer a clue into why the Gethenian people duel.

Spawning from total light, the ice created the men, and eventually, the myth explains, the light will be eaten up by the darkness and there will be an end. The Handdara is a religion with a beginning and an end with the Gethenian people living in the middle. Shifgrethor then at its very core is death and will consume a Gethenian. Yet before death, a Gethenian lives in the middle of light and dark, in the gray. Gethenian physiology is in this middle and only in kemmer do Gethenians live in the contrasts of either male or female. In the myth, the kemmering cycle is called, “burn” (238). In a frozen land with frozen people constructed from the ice and given life from their milk, to kemmer is to find heat within oneself. In kemmering, two Gethenians can meet in that heat and live in the contrasts until they return to the cold and return to the middle. In the Yomesh religion, Orgoreyn's national religion, contrastingly, there is no middle. There is neither beginning nor an end. There is only all at once.

The Yomesh myth duels with the Handdara myth's core: beginning, ending, light, dark, and shadow. For the Yomesh, there is only what is and the light. It is obvious why Orgoreyn scorns the open use of shifgrethor, then, because their religion is based on the premise that there is no shadow. Karhide has no national religion, but the Fastnesses of the Handarra can be found there. Karhide, in contrast, openly accepts shifgrethor and shadows make up the landscape. In Orgoreyn, however, there is primarily bright light and complete darkness and shadows are found rarely. Here readers find yet another piece of history, another bit of information that Le Guin uses to build a larger framework for understanding shifgethor. Gethenians duel because it is their very nature – stemming from their ancestral sin – but also because their religions duel. The Yomesh myth openly retaliates against the Handdara by calling its basic foundation a lie. The Handdara myth,

created centuries before the Yomesh, gives only an account of the beginning and the start of the middle, but, Estraven, a devout Handdarata explains, “to oppose something is to maintain it” (153). Although referencing kemmering-houses, the statement rings true in any context. And here, while scorn of the Yomesh is upon the Handdara and shifgrethor, it upholds them both, paralleling the use of shifgrethor in Orgoreyn. But the myths also give insights into aspects of shifgrethor alluded to, but not fully talked about, in the novel that of the limitations of the device. Genly, when he comes to understand the conversational device more fully, explains “now that the barriers were down, the limitation, in my terms, of our converse and understanding seemed intolerable to me” (249). Genly refers to the limitations of shifgrethor’s framework for guiding a Gethenian’s speech. Although Estraven has discarded parts of shifgrethor in their journey, he still refrains from talking and holds in many of his thoughts (232-235, 248-249). The large tree with his secretive leaf is a metaphor for the Gethenian. Shifgrethor gives truth a relativity and confines parts of truth to omission.

When Genly mindspeaks Estraven and speaks in the voice of his dead, kemmering brother (252) the truth is known and the shadowed leaf has been plucked. Mindspeech is an Ekumenical telepathy that has no lies (199) and while mindspeaking the participants speak with full truth; the past, the present and the shadow are completely seen (255). Without the pretenses of shifgrethor, Estraven’s shadow is looked upon by Genly, but even without lies mindspeaking lacks comprehension of the details. Although Genly speaks in Estraven’s brother’s voice, Genly does not grasp Estraven’s truth until later. In the first use of mindspeech between Estraven and Genly, readers find a foil to shifgrethor. While shifgrethor can hold truth in and frame it, mindspeech can release it

without boundaries. This complete truth unnerves Estraven and he soon works towards finding the untruth once more, “he quickly learned to set up the barriers, but I’m not sure he felt he could count on them” (254). After mindspeaking the two find the unshadow, a place where the white of the snow and the white of the sky blend and there are no shadows (260). The unshadow parallels Estraven’s experience with mindspeaking and his difficulty in living with the truth. Estraven needs both the framework of shifgrethor and his shadow returned to him. As Genly and Estraven fumble through the unshadow in their sledge, Estraven gropes to find his own in his head, but finally living with his truth, similar to the incestuous hearth tale, foreshadows Estraven’s fate. All of these elements give a reader a better insight into shifgrethor, from expounding upon the history and ancestral sin to exposing the untruth of shifgrethor. These elements give readers a deeper perspective of the device, and a deeper view into *LHD*.

Le Guin wove shifgrethor into every chapter, every sentence, every word of *LHD*. The device shapes the novel as much as it shapes the reader’s sight of the novel through Le Guin’s use of defamiliarization. Shifgrethor becomes a beacon of understanding for readers as the term takes shape throughout each interaction, each description, and each element created for the novel. Shifgrethor laces the novel together as it binds all literary devices together. In this action the Le Guinian device establishes a significance that makes a point about itself. As a device, it is multilayered. It derived from an old word for shadow, out of the old pre-Yomesh myth that offers the creation of the shadow out of ancestral sin. Shifgrethor frames and guides the spoken and unspoken metamessages. It is a concept executed in duels through oneupsmanship at Gethenian-to-Gethenian and nation-to-nation levels. Yet in a wider sense, shifgrethor touches into the metaphysical

and being of a Gethanian. Throughout all of this, shifgrethor develops a constant and overarching point that truth is relative. The novel starts and ends with the concept of relative truth (1-2, 293). In each instance Genly focuses on the truth being partial. In the first chapter, Genly explains he wrote his report as a story because, “truth is a matter of the imagination” (1). In the final chapter, Genly describes his explanation to his Ekumenical compatriots as “true in part; an aspect of truth” (293). After readers have followed Genly’s journey and built their understanding of shifgrethor throughout the entire novel, the device turns back on itself to explore the reality of what was just experienced. The conversations and actions may contrast with the meanings and implications of the speaker and doer when living the boundary-rich shifgrethor. After finding complete truth and light in mindspeech and the unshadow, it becomes unbearable for the characters as they try to find footholds and boundaries. Estraven notes, “It’s queer that daylight’s not enough. We need shadows, in order to walk” (267). Living in a full truth proves shocking and unbearable; the contrasts are necessitated. Le Guin’s novel cannot build from one truth, it must intermingle with other truths: “[...]yet none of them are false, and it is all one story”(2). When readers near the end of the novel, shifgrethor presents itself in full display by presenting the truth as relative and reality as a mix of different truths. For Genly this has resulted from a long journey across a world, for the readers, this has resulted from Le Guin using defamiliarization to confuse the meaning of communication so that readers would grope in the darkness to find truths.

V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

i. CONCLUSION

The Left Hand of Darkness offers readers pages of an alien landscape developed not by constructing characters and settings, but by reconstructing a common concept from the bottom up. Readers may find the Gethians and gichy-michy and kemmering, but the alien concept that proves to at once shadow and illuminate the novel is shifgrethor. Because Le Guin defamiliarized communication and develops shifgrethor, readers become wholly unstable and must read the novel carefully or risk losing their foothold. Shifgrethor creates the original conflict for the novel and continues to move the plot along by impeding and driving the main characters. Yet Le Guin continues to permeate the pages with shifgrethor in the way that she developed each city and landscape. Descriptions of cityscapes indicate shifgrethor standings and again elucidates the significance of the device. How the novel was constructed yet further demonstrates this. The epistolary format offers a battling of truths and brightens a view of shifgrethor to further enhance the device in readers' eyes. The strands of shifgrethor are sewn into each religion, each element, and develop a point to take away from the novel. Shifgrethor, thus, is not another communications device, like the ansible, created for the novel to sit by the wayside, but to find prominence. Without understanding the importance of shifgrethor, the relationship of Genly and Estraven fails to reveal itself to readers and the impact of their final connection may fail to reach its climax.

Russian Formalism forces a reader to critique a novel based on its own merits without the cloud and pressures of outside forces. The theory looks to find the truth of a novel within the context of the novel by analyzing literary devices. By defamiliarizing the

concept of conversation and creating shifgrethor, Le Guin forces readers to notice the conversations and to mull over the concept just as Genly did. Through the novel, Le Guin created elements that constructed how to view, understand, and, inevitably, how to use the concept in viewing itself. In doing so, Le Guin instills in readers a new perspective of seeing in the novel. By focusing on the novel itself, shifgrethor rises as a device of importance. *LHD* is comprehensively shifgrethor as the device is present in all aspects of the novel. Genly's unusual focus on and Estraven's use of the device maintain its significance until the end of *LHD*. By analyzing the novel with a foundation of Russian Formalism, a reader can see the novel for what it is: a truth. Shifgrethor thus makes more of an impact as it spotlights truth. The truth of the novel is truth. In the introduction to the novel, Le Guin writes, "The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words. Words can be used thus paradoxically because they have, along with a semiotic usage, a symbolic or metaphoric usage" (xi).

ii. FUTURE RESEARCH

Previous research on *The Left Hand of Darkness* specifically focusing on shifgrethor has little reflected the intricate nuances of the device. This examination of shifgrethor hopes to fill that void left in the academia. By founding the analysis in Russian Formalism, the theory forced the analysis to contextualize the Le Guinian device and build the overall thesis from itself instead of faulty and lacking academic research. Shifgrethor developed in a well-researched novel, yet has seen very little light from the academic world. Although I tried to investigate many of the nuances of shifgrethor, a thesis offers little room to fully ruminate the full underpinnings of the device. Shifgrethor's reach is vast. Le Guin noted in an email to me that silence was as much a

part of shifgrethor as speaking was. The use of the device in silence is particularly intriguing, yet a topic that I could not discuss with enough depth in these pages. In a short story written by Le Guin in 1995, entitled, “Coming of Age in Karhide” Le Guin includes new insights into shifgrethor. Yet, since the short story does not appear in the novel, I kept it from my analysis. The term obviously holds an interest for Le Guin—as she returned to it in “Coming of Age in Karhide.” Many strands of shifgrethor touch elements that deeply yearn for further elucidation. My own analysis barely touches on the depth of shifgrethor. Further research investigating the Le Guinian device of shifgrethor is needed.

APPENDIX A. GLOSSARY OF *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* TERMS**A.**

“A net for our pride, woven out of the sunshine” idiom. A hoax; Cliché.

Abos

Administration n. the group of people who constitute the executive branch of a co-domain or domain.

Afterlife Interim n. A religious place of existence after death.

Age of the Enemy n. great destruction resulting in the connection loss of worlds.

Ale n. a fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer yet much less potent than lifewater

Alehouse n. a place where ale and other alcoholic beverages are served

Alien Registry Law n. a rule of conduct or procedure pertaining to immigrants in Orgoreyn enacted in Kus.

“All roads lead to Mishnory.” Idiom. To oppose something is to maintain it.

Alshel Orgota man; presided over Genly Ai’s speech to the Hall of the Thirty-three in Orgoreyn

Alterra n. ally of the Ekumen; noted for inhabitants’ naturally high sensitivity for mindspeaking.

“A man must cast his own shadow.” Idiom. A man serves himself first.

Ambassador of the Ekumen of the Known World to Gethen n. A diplomatic official representing the Ekumen in Gethen; Genly Ai.

Amha n. Karh. Parent of the flesh; mother

Ancient Hainish n. Ekumenical ancestors.

Anner n. the fourth month of winter on Gethen.

Answerers n. see foretellers.

Ansible n. A faster than light communications device that transmits and receives messages by use of gravity waves; see mobile ansible.

Antarctic Continent n. see Tribesmen of Perunter.

Anti-kemmer adj. of or relating to impeding the natural kemmer phases: anti-kemmer shot or anti-kemmer hormones.

Archipelagan Ambassador n. A diplomatic official representing the Achipelago nation.

Archipelago n. A nation of Gethen, with reasonable volcanic activity, where the Ekumenical Team of Investigators first traveled to around 1448.

Arek n. see Arek Harth rem ir Estraven.

Arek Harth rem ir Estraven One year older brother of Estraven and heir of Estre until his death. n. last word Estraven spoke before he died: “Arek!”

Arek of Estre Character in East Karhidish tale that kemmers with Therem of Stok and is murdered.

Argaven Harge I Gethenian that created the kingdom of Karhide; Argaven the *first*.

Argaven Harge VIII Eighthking of Karhide.

Argaven Harge XIII Karhidish king that claimed the Sinoth Valley for Karhide.

Argaven Harge XV Current king of Karhide and first king to give audience to Genly Ai, after his landing; exhiled Estraven with Order of Exile.

Arhad n. the fourth day of the month; first crescent

Arikostor Fastness n. Fastness on the southern side of Kostor.

Artisan School n. Educational facility that teaches skills and crafts; students participated in the parade that celebrated the completion of the new Road and River Port of Erhenrang.

Asen Fastness n. 1. Fastness where Foretellers were forced to answer an unanswerable question. 2. Fastness where Meshe was a Weaver. See also Lord of Shorth, Question of Shorth.

Ashe n. Name used by Estraven to refer to his kemmering. See also Foreth rem ir Osborth.

Asker n. A person that poses a question to a group of Foretellers at a Fastness. see also Foretellers.

Asra Inmate of less than a year (from where) at the Pulefen Voluntary Farm who befriended Genly Ai until his death.

Assemblies of the Kingdom n. Karhidish group of officials; a seat in the Assemblies once belonged to Estraven.

Asyomse n. Geth. A star seventeen light-years away from Gethen. see also Ollul.

Athten Fen n. 1. A desolate and boggy region about thirty miles east of Erhenrang. 2. Landing site of the orbiting Star Ship. See also Interstellar ship.

Augury

B.

Bay of Guthen see Guthen Bay.

beer n. A fermented alcoholic beverage drank hot or warm on Gethen.

Beren prob. misspelling of Berny. see Berny.

Berny n. Seventh day of the month on the Gethenian Calendar.

Bessa n. soft, unpacked snow.

Bespeak v. **bespoke, bespoken, bespeaking, bespeaks**—intr. to mindspeak from one person to another. see also Mindspeak.

blackfish n. an aquatic animal that is commonly eaten roasted or pickled on Gethen.

Black vate n. a large Gethenian tree.

Blue stamp adj. Indicating a Gethenian as a paroled convict of Orgoreyn.

Borland n. Birthplace of Genly Ai; a region on Earth that contains green slopes and cherry trees.

Breadapples n. A Gethenian food that is often dried and sliced.

Breweries Street n. A street in Erhenrang, Karhide.

Bulletin n. Spoken or printed statements that offer Gethenians information about world, nation or domain news.

“**by Meshe’s—**” see Lord Meshe

“**By the Eye!**” interj. Used to express amazement or great pleasure.

C.

Celibate n. Actively participating foretellers who cannot take a mate during kemmer phases. ❖ v. taking no mate during kemmer phases.

Center of Time n. Yomesh ideology in which Meshe is the point in which there is no time. **See also Yomesh**

Central Bureau Radio n. Orgoreyn radio broadcast.

Ceremony of the Keystone n. Karhidish ceremony descended from very-long-ago that involves the present king mortaring the joints of the keystone with ground bones and blood.

Cetian n. Allied world of the Ekumen.

Chabe stove n. A bionic powered stove, heater, and lantern that can run continuously for fourteen months.

Chamberlain n. Manager of King Argaven XV's palace.

Charisune Gulf n. Large area of sea bordered by Karhide and Orgoreyn.

Charuthe n. 1. A poor domain in northern Osnoriner. 2. Location where Lord Berosty rem ir Ipe stayed in an East Karhidish story, see also Lord Berosty rem ir Ipe

Chiffewar n. 1. A peaceful allied world of the Ekumen. 2. Home world of Ong Tot Oppong. see also Yin and Yang.

Child of the flesh n. Offspring birthed from amha. see also amha.

Cime n. Allied world of the Ekumen.

Clan n. 1. A government recognized group or family of Gethenians smaller than a domain. 2. *Informal*. Group of Gethenians.

Clanhearth also **Clan-hearth** n. A structure that houses a group or family of Gethenians, esp. in Karhide.

Co-domain n. A dwelling place without a Lord.

College of Historians in Erhenrang n. Educational institute in Erhenrang, Karhide.

College of the Trades n. Educational institute in Sassinoth, Karhide, that houses a radio station.

the Commensals n. pl. Derives from a word meaning, "to eat together." 1. Thirty three heads of districts that form the governing body, executive and legislative, of The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn. 2. Citizens of The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn. 3. Districts of the country.

Commensal Government see The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Commensal hearth n. A clanless and nationalized facility that raises all children over the age of one in Orgoreyn.

Commensal Ithepen of Eynyen District Orgota Commensal who was in charge of censoring radio broadcasts from Erhenrang, Karhide.

Commensality adj. Of and pertaining to all national and governmental institutions of Orgoreyn.

Commensality of Orgoreyn see The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Commensal Kaharosile Disputed Genly Ai's report at his appearance in the Hall of the Thirty-three; suggested that Genly Ai was a sexual deviant from Karhide.

Commensal Obsle of the Sekeve District 1. Once headed the Orgota Naval Trade Commission in Erhenrang. 2. A short, inquisitive Orgota Commensal with small eyes, who seeks power and prestige for himself and for his government; wants to invite the Ekumen to Orgoreyn.

Commensal Slose of the Kuwera District 1. Orgota Commensal who heads a committee that censors plays at public kemmerhouses. 2. Orgota that wants to help Genly Ai.

Commensal Yegey Orgota Commensal who takes Estraven in when he is exiled from Karhide. 2. Seeks to enhance prestige and power for himself and for Orgoreyn.

Commensal Yemenbey An unruly Orgota Commensal who listened to Genly Ai's speech in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Commensal Transient-House of Siuwensin n. A structure in Siuwensin consisting of a dining room and a dormitory. see also Siuwensin

Commensal Voluntary Farm n. 1. Penal colony where transgressors of Orgoreyn are sent to work. See also Pulefen Commensality Third Voluntary Farm and Resettlement Agency.

the Commerce n. A building in Karhidish villages; where one can buy and sell items.

Commissioner n. Official of the Orgota Government who works in the Internal or External Administrations of the Government.

Commissioner Shusgis of Entry-Roads and Ports 1. Orgota citizen who works in the External Administration of the Orgota Government. 2. Provides lodging for Genly Ai in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Communicant n. One that can mindspeak.

Corner red dwelling n. 1. Estraven's residency while in Karhide, Erhenrang. 2. Built by Emran III for his kemmering, Harmes, 440 years ago. See also Emran the Illfated, Harmes

Councils of the Ekumen n. A group of people who govern the Ekumen. See also the Ekumen of the Known Worlds.

culminate phase n. the third phase of Kemmer, which involves having sexual intercourse with a partner.

D.

Dark cult n. Reference to the Handdara.

Darkness n. 1. The mental place where Foretellers go when someone seeks an answer. 2. Often an indirect reference to Shifgrethor. See also Shifgrethor

Death n. Walks in the parade celebrating the completion of the Road and River Port of Erhenrang.

“the devil!” interj. Expresses doubt or disbelief: “...*asking me what the devil was I really born on some other world...*”

Districts n. A commensality of Orgoreyn. See also the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Domain n. A large dwelling place, presided over by a Lord, comprised of towns; multiple domains make up a Kingdom.

Domains of the Void n. Worlds in outerspace.

Domesticate v. **domesticates, domesticated, domesticating**, To render a person docile by a forced addiction to a orgrevy derivatives.

Domination Faction n. A political party in Orgota Government with strong ties to the Sarf.

Dominator n. One who holds to the ideals of the Domination Faction.

Dothe n. The voluntary and controlled use of super-Gethenian strength, deeply rooted in the Handdara, after which the Gethenian will feel intense lethargy.

Dothe-strength n. The super-Gethenian strength which a Gethenian feels while in Dothe. See also Dothe.

Dream messages n Mindspeech to a sleeping individual.

Dremegole see Mount Dremegole.

Drumner see Mount Drumner.

E.

E.Y. n. Ekumenical Year.

Ebos n. A village in Kerm Land.

Edondurath n. Character from an Orgota Creation myth that wakes up and kills all but one of his brothers, kemmers with the living brother and creates shadow covered Gethenians.

Educer n. A teacher of the mindspeak.

Eighth hour n. 2:00 to 5:00 a.m.

the Ekumen of Known Worlds Ter. n. 1. A coordinator of nations, governed by the Councils of Ekumen, that is comprised of eighty-three habitable planets with about three thousand nations or anthrotypic groups that come together to trade knowledge and products. It sends out Envoys to potential allies to begin the connection. 2. Employer of Genly Ai. see also, First Investigators, Envoy,

Ekumenical adj. Of or pertaining to the Ekumen of Known Worlds.

Ekumenical Scope n. The extent to the Ekumen. See also, the Ekumen of Known Worlds

Ekumenical School n. The educational institution that prepares a Man for work in the Ekumen. see also the Ekumen of the Known Worlds.

Ellul see Ollul

Emrang the Illfated died forty years after his kemmering, Hermes, was killed. See also, Hermes.

Eng Street n. A street in Karhide, Erhenrang where a jeweler works.

Ennoch The false name of Getheren of Shath after he was exiled from Shath Domain because his brother committed suicide. See also, Getheren of Shath and Hode of Shath.

Ensbo n. Allied world of the Ekumen.

Envoy n. 1. A stranger or representative from another world. 2. Ekumenical representative: Genly Ai.

Envoy Plenipotentiary of the Ekumen n. The highest position of Envoy that grants him or her ability to discuss and sign an alliance.

Eps n. the third day of the month.

Erhenrang n. Capital city of Karhide, known for its red-mortared brick buildings and public and private Hearths and Schools for children 2. Home of King Argavan XV

Erhenrang Palace n. Home to King Argavan XV and his dynasty.

Esagel Bay n. A partially enclosed arm where the Esagel River meets the Western Sea that is known for its grey rocks; where Ethwen resides.

Esagel River n. A large natural flow of water in Orgoreyn near the Sembensyen Mountains that empties into the Western Sea.

Eserhoth Crags n. Mountain tips emerged through the snow and ice in Orgoreny, near Shenshey Bogs and west of Guthen Bay. Also known as nunataks.

Eskar n. The 15,200 feet above sea-level summit on the Kargav foothills.

Eskeve poss. adj. Of or relating to Sekeve.

Eskichwe rem ir Her A scientist that has studied the volcanoes or Fire-Hills and their likely effects on the Gethenian temperature.

Estraven see Therem Harth rem ir Estraven.

Estraven the Traitor Character in East Karhidish tale, also known as Therem of Estre, who defeated his brothers and vowed peace with his mortal enemy.

Estre n. 1. Shortened version of Therem of Estre or Estraven the Traitor. 2. The Domain of Estre.

Esvans Harth rem ir Estraven The Lord of the Domain of Estre in Kerm Land 2. Therem Harth rem ir Estraven's amha.

Ethwen A grey port of seamen built at the mouth of the Esagel River into the Western Sea.

External Administration n. Offices of the Orgota government that govern the needs of the citizens: the Water Offices.

Ey River n. A noisy, narrow, glacier-fed river that creates a border between Karhide and Orgoreyn.

Eye of Meshe n. From Yomesh canon about 900 years ago.

Eynyen District A district in Orgoreny.

F.

Farm n. See Pulefen Commensality Third Voluntary Farm and Resettlement Agency.

Fastnesses see Handarra Fastnesses.

Faxe A Foreteller at the Otherhord fastness; a Weaver.

Fifth Hour n. 7:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Fire-Hills n. Volcanoes.

Fire mouths n. The opening of a volcano.

Firn n. Hard and dense snow.

First Hour n. Noon to 2:30 p.m.

First Mobile n. The initial representative of the Ekumen to make contact with an unallied world's government.

First Investigators n. The first group of researchers from the Ekumen to examine a planet's potential for entrance into the Ekumen.

Fish flakes n. Edible dried fish.

Fish Island n. *informal* The island in which Estraven stayed when in Mishnory, Orgoreny after his exile from Karhide.

fixed ansible n. The ansible that remains on a planet and uses its gravitational field to transmit and receives faster than light communications to a portable ansible. See also, ansible, portable ansible. NOTE: This, "*fixed ansible*," is not a term within the novel, this term was necessary to fully explain "ansible" clearly.

Foray Gun n. A loud and lethal gun that fires pieces of metal; thought of as ancient and barbaric in all of Gethen, yet still in use in Karhide.

"For God's sake!" interj. Used to express something unexpected.

Forest of Otherhord n. A tended patch of hemmen trees surrounding Otherhord Fastness outside of Rer.

Foreth n. Shortened version of Foreth rem ir Osboth offered to Genly Ai. See also Foreth rem ir Osboth.

Foreth rem ir Osborth Estraven's kemmering and amha of his two sons. 2. Sends money with Genly Ai to give to Estraven after his exile from Karhide. See Ashe and Foreth.

Foretellers See Handarrata Foretellers

Foretelling See Handarrata Foretelling

Fourth hour n. 7:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Four-Taurus n. 1. An allied world of the Ekumen. 2. Remembered by Genly Ai for killing their First Mobile.

Full kemmer n. The third phase of kemmer in which the body determines its sex. See also kemmer.

Full phase n. The stage in kemmer in which the body has determined its sex and will soon be entering into the culminant phase. See kemmer, culminant phase

G.

Gao n. World which committed the first three mobiles from the Ekumen into mental institutions.

Gaum 1. Handsome, Orgota, Open agent of the Sarf who wishes all Karhide Kings a short life and doubts Genly Ai's report of the Ekumen; tries to seduce Estraven.

Gde n. A hot and desert-like allied planet of the Ekumen.

Genly Ai The First Mobile and an Envoy of the Ekumen to arrive on Gethen.

Gesture of Friendship n. 1. Offering both hands to another. 2. A meaningful but rare symbol of deep emotion in Karhide. 3. A common action in Orgoreyn.

Gethen n. 1. A potential allied world of the Ekumen. 2. World where Genly Ai becomes the First Mobile. 3. A world in an Ice Age, seventeen to two hundred-fifty light years from the Ekumenical Scope, marked for its ambisexual natives, use of shifgrethor and comprised of multiple nations, Karhide, Orgoreyn, Sith, Perunter. (more?)

Gethenian adj. Of or pertaining to Gethen.

Gethenians n. 1. Inhabitants of Gethen characteristically identified by their short stature, ambisexual sex and yellow-brown or red-brown to dark brown skin color.

Gethenian Calendar n. Comprised of fourteen months consisting of twenty six days with each no longer than ten hours. Each new year named "Year One" with the past year labeled, "one ago" and the future year as, "one to come." NOTE: Differs from the Terran calendar since Gethen rotates and revolves around the sun a bit slower than Earth; the months and days follow their solar and lunar calendar and their sexual cycle.

Gethenian double-sexed n. The ambisexual tendency of Gethenians.

Gethenian norms The average pertaining to Gethenian culture, inhabitants or land.

Gethenian Sexual Cycle n. The 26 to 28 day reproductive cycle that includes somer and kemmer phases. See also somer and kemmer

Gethenian split screen eyeshields n. Eyewear that shields and protects the wearer from the snow-blindness on Gethen.

Gethenian Thermometer n. A device that measures the temperature on Gethen, characteristic for its counterclockwise dials.

Getheny n. The first day of the month.

Getheren of Shath or **Getheren** or **Ennoch** 1. Character in North Karhidish hearth tale that vowed kemmering with his brother, Hode of Shath, and was exiled from Shath Domain after his brother's suicide; renounced his name and lived in Rer until he took back his name, became ill and died. See also Hode of Shath, Shath Domain.

Gichy-michy Org. n. Fortified, dehydrated, compressed, cubed mixture of high-energy foods that expands after soaking in hot water. *Vulgar Slang* Of very poor quality: *You don't swallow this gichy-michy, do you?*

“the Glaciers didn't freeze over night.” *Cliché.* Used to express the necessity of patience and time.

Go n. A strategic, Terran game played on squares with stones.

Gobrin Glacier or **Gobrin Ice** or **the Ice** n. 1. A huge sheet of ice slowly moving over the land of Orgoreyn and small parts of Karhide. 2. What Genly Ai and Estraven must traverse on their journey from Orgoreyn to Karhide.

Gobrin Hinterlands n. The Gobrin Glacier between Orgoreyn and Karhide. See also Gobrin Glacier.

Gobrin Plateau or **Gobrin Ice Plateau** n. A four mile wide section of the Gobrin Glacier between Mount Drumner and Mount Dremegole.

Gor n. The twelfth month and first month of Autumn See Gethenian Calendar

Gorinhering or **Gorinhering Hearth** n. A Clan-hearth in Karhide where Genly Ai stays when touring the Karhide Nation.

Goss A young Indweller at Otherhord Fastness who watches and does not participate in the Foretelling Group.

Gossiwors n. 1. A bellowing instrument that plays only in the kings' presence at Karhide; the Royal Music. 2. An instrument that, Genly Ai wonders, makes the Kings of Karhide mad.

Government of the Thirty-three n. The political authority in Orgoreyn comprised of thirty-three Commensals which is balanced by the Sarf.

the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn. n. 1. One of the largest nations on Gethen and is made up of two political parties, the Domination Faction and the Open Traders, two authorities, the Commensals and the Sarf, and is characteristic for their bureaucratic, yet highly censored and authoritarian governing; openly opposes shifgrethor. Cap. Mishnory. 2. Estraven moves to this nation after his exile from Karhide. 3. Genly Ai comes to this nation, after failing to ally Gethen and the Ekumen in Karhide, and is imprisoned in the Pulefan Commensality Third Voluntary Farm and Resettlement Agency.

the Great Continent n. The Largest landmass which Karhide and Orgoreyn reside on which is characteristic for Glacier fed rivers and compactly made, round Gethenians with fur-like, black hair, broad faces and pronounced cheeks.

Grende n. The fourteenth and last month of the year. See also Gethenian Calendar.

The Gulf n. see Charisune Gulf.

Gulf of Charisune see Charisune Gulf.

Guyrny n. Tenth day of the month.

Guthen Bay or **Bay of Guthen** or **the Frozen Sea** n. A body of frozen sea water reaching from Karhide to the north pole on Gethen, fed from the Gobrin Glacier.

H.

Habben n. A literary work written for performance on the stage. Note: This may refer to the theatrical productions that can be found at Public Kemmerhouses, because of its promiscuous content; however, no character mentions this connection.

Haharath n. A character, made from soil, seawater, sun and icemilk, from an Orgota creation myth that wakes up into the world to find his brother, Edondurath, killing their other brothers. Haharath flees from Edondurath but ends up cornered and dies.

Hain n. 1. The planet where Man first began. 2. The prime world of the Ekumen where the fixed ansible resides. Note: Genly Ai mentioned that he trained to work for the Ekumen on this planet, and this may be the location of the Ekumenical School; however, Genly does not explain the particular positioning of this school in his reports.

Hain-Devenant n. Possibly the full name of the planet, Hain.

Hainish adj. Of or pertaining to Hainish. n. The people of Hain, who settled all worlds of Men.

Hainish Cycle n. Note: Although referenced a few times in the report headers of Genly Ai and Ong Tot Oppong, the Hainish Cycle is little understood as neither character explores this cycle and all references contain the number 93: *Hainish Cycle: 93*. This cycle may be invariable.

Hainishnorm n. The average pertaining to Hain.

Hakanna n. Eleventh month of the year and fourth month of Summer. See also, Gethenian Calendar.

Halfdeads Karh. slang. Gethens with a permanent hormonal imbalance toward male or female; sterile. See also, Pervert.

Halfmonth n. Half of a month; thirteen days.

Hall of the Thirty-three n. The closed off facility where the thirty-three Commensals of Orgoreyn work. 2. The place where Genly Ai was given an audience and sent to a Volunteer Farm.

Handdara n. A Gethenian, passive religion started twelve thousand years ago, that includes Fastnesses and Foretellers, that prides ignorance and unknowing, culminated in the word, Nusuth, and practices the Handdara discipline of Presence and Dothe. Believes beyond God. ❖ Adj. Of or pertaining to Handdara. See also Handdarata

Handdara discipline of Presence n. A Handdara

Handdara Fastnesses n. Handdarata retreat where Foretellers gather to prophesy.

Handdara Foretellers n. A Handdarata group at a Fastness consisting of a Weaver, Zanies, Indwellers and a Pervert for purposes of answering a question posed by an asker.

Handdara Foretelling v. The act of a group of Foretellers to answer a question posed by an asker; phophesying. adj. Of or pertaining to the act of foretelling.

Handdarata n. A follower of the Handdara religion.

the Harge Kings n. The Argavan Harge Dynasty.

Harge rem ir Tibe see **Pemmer harge rem ir Tibe**

Harhahad n. Ninth day of the month.

Harmes Hansome kemmering to Emran III, Emrang the Illfated, was abducted, mutilated and rendered imbecile by the Innerland Faction.

Harth n. 1. First name of Estraven 2. used by Hearth-brothers or friends.

Harth rem ir Estraven see Therem Harth rem ir Estraven

Hearth¹ n. 1. A topical and genealogical Karhidish dwelling place larger than a tribelet yet smaller than a co-domain or domain; resembles that of an Island with a multi-roomed makeup and communal spaces. 2. The Karhidish word for the Ekumen.

hearth² n. the floor of a fireplace.

Hearth-brothers n. Kin from the same familial dwelling place; generally have the same name as the Hearth.

Hearthless adj. A pathetic condition of being without a Hearth.

Hearth of Estre n. 1. Resides in Kerm Land in the Domain of Estre 2. the Hearth of Estraven and his kin.

Hearth of Shath n. 1. Found in the Pering Storm-border. 2. Hearth of North Karhidish hearth-tale characters, Getheren and Hode Shath.

hearthfellows n. Members of the same Hearth; used interchangeably with Hearthmen.

hearthgod n. Religious deity worshipped by particular Hearths; outside of the Handdara and Yomesh religions

Hearth-Hall n. General name for a Hearth.

Hearthmen n. Members of the same Hearth; used interchangeably with Hearthfellows.

hearth-tales n. Stories passed down, generally orally, traditionally in Hearths

Hearth-tower n. The highest level in the Hearth.

heir of the body or **heir of the flesh** n. A child not sired but instead born from the amha.

Hemmentree n. 1. Most common tree on Gethen. 2. A large, dark, cone-bearing tree with scarlet needles.

Heo Hew see Lang Heo Hew.

Herbor of the Geganner Clan n. Character from East Karhidish story that vowed kemmering with Ashe Berosty rem ir Ipe and went to seek information for Ashe at Thangering Fastness but was killed because of the vague answer he found. See also, Ashe Berosty rem ir Ipe, Thangering Fastness.

Hes-kyorremy n. Inner Council, which serves as counterweight to the Prime Minister, in the Karhidish government.

Hieb n. A long tabard-like over tunic that has at least one pocket, comes in various colors and can be belted to secure closer to the body.

High Priest n. Yomesh religious leader named Tuhulme.

Hinterlands see Gobrin Hinterlands.

Hode of Shath n. Character in North Karhidish hearth-tale that vows kemmering with his brother, Getheren of Shath, becomes pregnant and is forced to break the kemmering vow from the Lord of Shath and kills himself. See also, Getheren of Shath, Lord of Shath, Suicide

Hodomin Ocean n. Located on the Great Continent and in Karhide, and known for its eternal fog.

Hoolm n. Crops that farms grow on the northern hemisphere of S.

Homsvashaom n. A district in Orgoreyn.

Horden Island n. 1. Part of the Karhide nation and frequented by fishermen. 2. Landing place of the First Mobile, Genly Ai.

Horm fever n. 1. A deathly ailment that plagues Gethen. 2. Scapegoat of Orgoreyn's authoritarian government.

Hot tea n. A popular beverage drank on Gethen.

Household Ct. n. The Ekumen

Household of Man Ct. n. All planets seeded by the Hainish.

“How the devil” interj. Expressing outrage or resentment.

Huhuth Karh. n. Kemmerhouse plays.

Humery A fat old Orgota that dines with Commensal Yegey, Genly Ai and others in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

I.

the Ice n. *Informal.* Gobrin Glacier. See also Gobrin Glacier

iceboat n. A common way to traverse the winter climate on Gethen.

“I had my eyes on the stars, and didn't watch the mud I walked in” idiom. Used to warn others about the dangers of avoiding reality.

Icefoot Lake n. Resides in Kerm Land, north of the Gobrin Glacier and near the Domain of Estre. NOTE: Because boundaries and borders are often not described in the novel, Icefoot Lake may be *near* or *in* the Domain of Estre.

Ice knife n. 1. A stabbing weapon or tool for cutting. 2. Estraven kept one at his side until he left his Hearth, but brought one with him when he rescued Genly Ai from Pulefen Commensality Third Voluntary Farm and Resettlement Agency.

“I must set the keystone in the arch” idiom. Used in referring to finishing a task or mission.

Incest n. 1. Sexual intercourse between close relatives. 2. Permitted except in cases of generational relations and requires that siblings who kemmer cannot keep kemmer after the birth of a child. The only exception to this rule may be Tribesman in Perunter, the Antarctic Continent.

Indwellers n. A general term for people that reside in Fastnesses for any length of time, who participate in Foretelling or just watch.

Inner Council see Hes-kyorremy.

Inspection Point or **Inspection Station** n. A stop along the roads crossing in and through Orgoreyn that inspects personal identification papers.

Inspector n. 1. An official of the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn that inspects personal identification papers. 2. Common job in Orgoreyn: *“Behind every man in Orgoreyn comes the Inspector”*

Innerland Faction n. A group during the time of Argavan III that abducted, mutilated and mindchanged of Argavan’s beautiful kemmering Hermes.

Inner Hearth n. NOTE: This may connote an older Hearth or the position of the Hearth in a country, yet this term is little used in the novel.

Internal Administration n. Multiple offices of the Orgoreyn government that looks after the internal affairs presided over by the Sarf.

Interstellar Cetian Design NAFAL-20- n. 1. A manned starship. 2. Orbiting Gethen’s sun and contains eleven Ekumenical officers in hibernation awaiting Genly Ai’s further instructions. 3. Ek. Cannot land on a populated planet until open communications or alliance is established.

Investigator n. A team of undercover Ekumenical researchers that examine the potentiality of a world to ally with the Ekumen.

Irrem n. The fifth month in the year and first year of Spring.

Isenpath Cave Shrine n. 1. In the Gobrin Hinterlands 2. Where a pre-Yomesh written text was found which contained a creation myth.

the Island Nations or **the Islands** n. A nation of Gethen.

island see Karhosh

Ithepen see **Commensal Ithepen of Eynyen District**

K.

Kadik germ n. An edible grain that is commonly made into porridge for breakfast that some Gethenians sweeten with sugar.

Kaharosile see Commensal Kaharosile

Kapetyn n. Allied world of the Ekumen.

Kargav or **Karga** n. A snow-covered mountain range between Erhenrang and Rer; known for its treacherous eastern slope.

Karhide see **Nation-Dominion of Karhide**

“Karhide is not a nation but a family quarrel!” cliché. 1. Indicating that the Domains of Karhide quarrel often. 2. Possibly coined by Estraven.

Karhider n. 1. Indigenous to the nation of Karhide.

Karhidish adj. Of or pertaining to Karhide.

Karhidish farmers n. Farmers from Karhide living in the Sinoth Valley. See Sinoth Valley Dispute.

Karhidish Government n. Made up of two counterbalancing positions, the Prime Minster and the Hes-kyorremy, limited only by the constraints of the King, and preside over the kyorremy the Court of Lords, Mayors and representatives of the Domains and Co-domains.

Karhidish village n. Contains buildings of the Hearth, the Commerce, the Domain or Co-Domain, and the Outer-House; like an ancient castle of Earth.

Ke’sta One of eleven Ekumenical agents who waited for Genly Ai’s report on the Interstellar Cetian Design NAFAL-20 starship; settled with Tulier in Erhenrang.

kemmer n. 1. Sexual intercourse for Gethenians. 2. Comprised up of four phases that include first phase, having sexual potency, second phase, establishing sexuality, third phase, having sexual intercourse with a partner, and the fourth phase, either having a menstrual cycle or becoming pregnant. ❖v. The act of sexual intercourse.

kemmerer n. A Gethenian in kemmer.

kemmering n. A Gethenian joined to another Gethenian in a monogamous marriage. See vowing kemmering.

kemmerhouse n. A public facility where Gethenians can kemmer.

kemmer-partners n. Two Gethenians that decide to kemmer together.

kemmer period n. Amount of time that a Gethenian stays in kemmer: three to six days.

kemmer-reduction drugs n. Chemicals that hinder, decrease the potency, or completely stop the kemmer phases.

kemmering-son n. A sired child.

Kerm Land n. A vast stretch of land and ice that contains Estraven's home, the Domain of Estre, part of Karhide and is known for its plenteous pesthry and thore trees.

keystone see Ceremony of the Keystone.

King Argavan XV see **Argaven Harge XV**

King's ear n. 1. Lord of the kingdom. 2. The position in Karhide that presides over the kyorremy; appointed by the King. 3. Estraven until he was exiled; Lord Tibe until he resigned.

King's Guard n. Protectors of the King in Karhide who arm themselves with foray guns.

Kings of Karhide n. The Argavan Dynasty.

"Kings of Karhide are all mad!" adage. Expresses the general understanding that the Dynasty in Karhide is comprised of crazy Gethenians.

Komsvashom n. A part of the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn; contains a Voluntary Farm.

Koster Mount. A mountain, four miles (21, 120 ft), of the Kargav Mts near Erhenrang and Rer.

kroxet n. Windless weather with a temperature between 0° and 20° F.

Kuhurn n. A planet in the same solar system as Gethen.

Kuhumey n. A large city of about 250,000 Gethenians with a powerful radio transmitter.

Kunderer Bridge n. Leads in and out of Mishnory, Orgoreyn and crosses over the River Kunderer.

Kunderer Embankment n. Confinement of the River Kunderer in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Kunderer Valley n. The vast plain spreading from the border of Karhide and Orgoreyn to Mishnory.

Kundershaden Prison n. 1. An old prison in Mishnory, Orgoreyn. 2. Where Genly Ai is imprisoned before he is sent to Pulefen Commensality Third Voluntary Farm.

Kurem n. Damp weather with a temperature between 0° to 20° F.

Kurkurast Domain n. Domain in Karhide where Genly Ai and Estraven stay after their crossing of the Ice.

Kus. n. Tenth month of the year and third month of Summer. See Gethenian Calendar.

Kuseben n. Community that lies on the Charisune Gulf.

Kuwera n. The third district of Orgoreyn.

kyorremy n. The upper chamber or parliament which the King's Ear heads.

L.

Landboat n. Electric-powered truck that moves with continuous tracks.

Lang Heo Hew One of eleven Ekumenical agents who waited for Genly Ai's report on the Interstellar Cetian Design NAFAL-20 starship.

Last Art n. The art of Mindspeaking

lifewater n. Potent alcoholic beverage from the Sith Nation.

Listener n. A natural empath.

lobaline n. A natural stimulant.

local Stability Ct. n. A set of representatives that functions as coordinator on the planet and with other planets.

Lord Berosty rem ir ipe Character in an East Karhidish story who asks the Foretellers at Thangering Fastness, "On what day shall I die?" he consequently locks himself in his Hearth, and then murders his kemmering. See also, Herbor of the Geganner clan

Lord of Estre n. A title; the highest rank in a Hearth that is usually inherited.

Lord of Estre in Kerm n. 1. The official title of the presiding Lord in Estre. 2.

Estraven's Hearth title.

Lord Gorchern n. Chamberlain at Argavan XV's palace.

Lord Harish rem ir Stokven Character in an East Karhidish tale who is the amha of Theren of Stok.

Lord Meshe Founder of the Yomesh religion who was born 2,202 years ago. ❖interj.

“By Meshe!” 1. In the name of; usually positive. 2. Used to express negative feelings: *“By Meshe's guts!” “By Meshe's tits!” “By the milk of Meshe.”* 3. Used to express amazement: *“By the breasts of Meshe!” “O by Meshe's sweet milk!”* **see also “By the Eye”**

Lord of Shath Character in a North Karhidish hearth-tale who forced his two sons to break kemmering. See also Getheren of Shath and Hode of Shath.

Lord of Shorth n. Lord that asked the Foretellers of Asen Fastness, “What is the meaning of life?” that resulted in his death.

Lord Sorve Name of the Lord of Estre, a character in an East Karhidish tale, the amha of Arek of Estre, who takes in and raises his son's sired son and makes him the heir of Estre.

Lord Tibe see **Pemmer Harge rem ir Tibe**

M.

Man n. Descendant of the Hainish; lives on various worlds.

Mavriva An old Gethenian who leads a group of pesthra hunters, including Estraven, up the Esagel River and through the Sembensyen Mountains.

Mersen A spy from Erhenrang intent on proving himself a true Orgota.

Meshe see **Lord Meshe**

mindcall v. **mindcalls, mindcalled, mindcalling** The act of mindspeaking. See also, mindspeaking

mindchange v. to render someone an imbecile or insane.

mindchanged n. having been rendered an imbecile or insane.

mindread v. **mindreads, mindreading** To listen to the thoughts of another. See also, mindspeak

mind-science n. The study of mindspeaking

mindspeak v. **mindspeaks, mindspeaking, bespeak, bespoken** To converse with someone through thoughts.

mindspeech proper n The act or an instance of mindspeaking.

Mishnory n Capital township of Orgoreyn and known for its cream yellow stone buildings and many temples of the Yomesh cult.

Mishnory road n. The main road of Mishnory.

Mobile n. Ekumenical representative that tries to ally a world with the Ekumen.

mobile ansible n. The portable ansible that can send or receive messages to a fixed ansible. See also, ansible, fixed ansible

Moth n. Sixth month of the year and second month of Spring.

Mount Dremegole n. An active Fire-hill residing in Orgoreyn across the Gobrin Glacier from Mount Drumner.

Mount Drumner n. An active Fire-hill in Orgoreyn across the Gobrin Glacier from Mount Dremegole

N.

NAFAL ship see **Interstellar Cetian Design NAFAL-20**

“Name of Meshe!” interj. To signal annoyance or distain.

Nation-Dominion of Karhide n. 1. One of the largest nations in Gethen governed by a highly erratic and eccentric monarchy, King Argavan XV, that presides over a Prime Minister and Hes-kyorremy; uses shifgrethor with fervor. Cap. Erhenrang. 2. Genly Ai first lands in this nation and stays for two years before leaving for Orgoreyn.

nations of the Sea Hemisphere n. 1. Multiple nations residing on Gethen in the Sea Hemisphere. 2. Completely ignored by Genly Ai.

Neserem n. Fine snow on a moderately strong wind; a light blizzard.

Netherhad n fifth day of the month. See also, Gethenian Calendar.

New Epoch n. A time of great change in Orgoreyn history that rid the nation of titles and much of the habitants freedom.

New Port n. NOTE: May reference the newly completed River Port of Erhenrang or a completely different Port; novel leaves this misunderstood.

Ninth hour n. 7:00 to 9:30 a.m.

Nim see Otie Nim

Nimmer n. The third month in the year and the third month of Winter.

Nobles Faction n. A group from Karhide. NOTE: Unclear reference, possibly a part of the kyorremy or a political party. I THINK POLITICAL PARTY 184

non-Ally planet n. A planet that has yet to accept the invitation to join the Ekumenical scope.

North Fall n. A part of Karhide. NOTE: Unclear if this is a Domain, Co-Domain or Hearth.

North Pole n. The most northern edge of Gethen.

Nusuth Hand. It doesn't matter.

O.

Obberny n. twentieth day of the month.

Obsle see Commensal Obsle of the Sekeve District.

Ocean of space n. Outer space.

Ockre n. The ninth month of the year and the second month of Summer. See also, Gethenian Calendar.

Odarhad n. Seventeenth day of the month.

Odeps n. Sixteenth day of the month.

Odgetheny n. 1. Fourteenth day of the month. 2. Undarkness.

Odguyrny n. twenty-third day of the month.

Odharahahad n. Twenty-second day of the month.

Odorny n. Twenty-first day of the month.

Odren see Weaver Odren

Odsordny n. Fifteenth day of the month.

Odstreth n. Nineteenth day of the month

Odyrny n. Twenty-fourth day of the month.

Old Bridge n. A bridge in Erhenrang allowing passage over the Sess River.

Old Karhide see Rer.

old King's City see Rer.

Old Land see Rer.

the Old Man or **Old Men** n. *informal* Foretellers residing in Fastnesses.

Old Way see Handarra.

Ollul or **Ellul** n. 1. Allied world of the Ekumen. 2. Closest Ekumenical allied planet to Gethen, seventeen light years away and a stabile. 3. Orbiting planet of Asyomse.

one ago n. The fixed term for the year before this one. See also, Year One, one to come

one to come n. The fixed term for the next year. See also, Year One, one ago

Ong Tot Oppong Undercover, female, Ekumenical investigator who studied Gethen's culture focusing primarily on their reproductive cycle and social repercussions of being ambisexual.

Onnetherhad n. Eighteenth day of the month.

Open-Trade Faction n. Minority political party in Orgoreyn known for their democratic ideals. 2. Political party of Commensals Yegey and Obsle.

Open-Trader n. Member of the Open-Trade Faction.

Opposthe n. Twenty-fifth day of the month.

Order of the Exile n. A revocable commandment of the Karhidish Government made from the King or Prime Minister that banishes a Gethenian from the Nation-Dominion of Karhide, often includes a night's warning, but always offers the exiled three days to leave the nation.

Orgny Fastness n. Closest Fastness to Erhenrang, Karhide.

Orgoreyn see The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Orgota n. Inhabitants or natives of the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn. adj. Of or pertaining to the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Orgota Government n. A bureaucratic government broken up into an Internal Administration and External Administration that is headed by two factions, the Sarf and the thirty-three Commensalities, who vote on issues brought before them;

Orgota kardik-grain n. Seed crops from Orgoreyn. NOTE: This may result in kadik-germ, or may be another spelling of kadik

Orgota prison n. Detestable holding facility that examines inmates through the use of various drugs and induces sickness by regulations restricting food intake and clothing. See also, Voluntary Farms.

Orgrevy n. A highly addictive compound used in domesticating inmates in the Orgota prisons. See also, Domestication, Orgota prison.

Orhoch Hearth n. Hearth in a North Karhidish hearth-tale where Getheren of Shath lives after his brother's suicide and his own exit of Shath Domain.

Ornen Forest n. A forest in *The Sayings of Tuhulme the High Priest*, from the Yomesh religion.

Orny n. Eighth day of the month.

orsh n. Brown, bittersweet beverage brewed from roasted perm grain high in vitamins A and C; natural stimulant and related to lobaline.

oskyommer Karh. n. the act of vowing kemmering.

Osme n. Eighth month of the year and first month of Summer.

Osnoriner n. A place that Ong Tot Oppong investigates in E.Y. 1448 and decides that divorce resides, but not remarriage or re-oskyommer.

Otherhord Fastness n. 1. Fastness outside of Rer residing in the Forest of Otherhord. 2. Fastness where Genly Ai visits, stays and asks a question. 3. Fastness where Faxe works as a Foreteller until he becomes the Hes-kyorremy.

Otie Nim One of the Ekumenical Investigators who examined Gethen around 1448; researched Orgoreyn and offered research to Ong Tot Oppong. See also, Investigators, Ong Tot Oppong.

Ottormenbod n. Twenty-sixth day of the month.

Outer Hearth n. Initial room in the Hearth; large foyer.

Outer-House n. Building; a part of the make up of a Karhidish village. See Karhidish village

Ovard Domain n. Domain of Karhide near the Orgota Border and the Ey River.

P.

Palace Bulletin n. Usually a oral, sometimes written, piece of information from the Palace of Erhenrang in Karhide.

Palace of Erhenrang n. Residence of the Karhide Dynasty, their servants and government officials; an inner city.

paraverbal speech see Mindspeech.

Parsid or the tale of Parsid n. A well-known Orgota story told for excitement and pleasure.

Passerer n. A Karhidish village in the Sinoth Valley region across the Ey from Siuwensin, Orgoreyn.

peditia Org. n. Thick, wet snow fall. See also sove-snow.

Pellelge A First Mobile killed on Taurus.

Pemmer harge rem ir Tibe or **harge rem ir Tibe** or **Lord Tibe** 1. King Argavan XV's cousin 2. Prone to orating and becomes the King's Ear and then Regent after King Argavan XV becomes pregnant. Against Genly Ai and wants war with Orgoreyn. Has Estraven killed at the Karhide/Orgoreyn border.

permanent kemmer n. The state of having only one sex.

perm-grain n. A grain crop that can be roasted and brewed into a sweetsour tea called orsh.

Pering Ice n. Glacial sheet that covers the northernmost edge of Karhide and adjoins Gobrin Ice in the winter.

Pering Storm-border n. Northeast corner of Karhide.

Perunter n. Extremely cold country consisting of nations; commonly thought of as barbaric.

Pervert n. A Handdarata Foreteller with only one sex.

pervert n. 1. A man with only one sex. 2. Genly Ai.

perversion n. Permanent hormonal imbalance toward the male or female.

pesthry n. 1. A small, white-furred, migratory animal. 2. Commonly skinned for its fur. 3. the fur of a pesthry.

place inside the blizzard n. Where those who kill themselves go.

poor man of Sheney Character in *The Sayings of Tuhulme the High Priest*, who comes to Meshe and grieving over his starving Hearth and is told to dig up ancient jewels.

Port-and-Palace Street n. Street near the Sess River and Erhenrang Palace in Erhenrang, Karhide.

Posthe n. Twelve day of the month.

Powersledge n. An electric-powered sled.

prestige-competition n. reference to shifgrethor.

prestige-loss n. reference to shifgrethor.

prestige-struggle n. reference to shifgrethor.

prestige-trap n. reference to shifgrethor.

prestige-weight n. reference to shifgrethor.

Prime Minister n. the King's Ear.

Prime World n. The world that all Men came from; Hain.

prophecy n. Prediction made by the Handdarata Forellers.

Pulefen Commensality Third Voluntary Farm and Resettlement Agency n. 1. Orgota prison in the Pulefen District, where inmates work off their debts and are subjected to regular anti-kemmer shots or injected with drugs; guarded by probationary prisoners. 2. Where Genly Ai is imprisoned in Orgoreyn.

Pyenenfen street n. A street in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Q.

Question of Shorth n. "What is the meaning of life?" Question asked to Asen Fastness by the Lord of Shorth, which resulted in catatonic Celibates, dead Zanies, and the death of Lord Shorth.

R.

Red Hall n. Large hall in Erhenrang Palace with a hearth. 2. Location where Genly Ai first meets King Argavan XV.

Red Hills n. Area of hilly terrain near Guthen Bay and touching the Gobrin Glacier.

Regent n. One who rules during the absence of King Argavan XV. 2. Pemmer Harge rem ir Tibe.

Regional Bureau n. Government department of Orgoreyn.

Remny Tower n. A time-keeping tower in Erhenrang, Karhide.

Rer n. An ancient Karhidish city beyond the Kargav Mountains in Karhide that once housed the Kings of Karhide.

River Ench n. Near the port city of Thather.

River Esagel n. variant of Esagel River.

River Kunderer n. Large river flowing north to south in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Road and River Port of Erhenrang n. An operation that took five years to complete; along the Sess River in Erhenrang, Karhide.

Rokanan n. An allied world of the Ekumen.

Rotherer Fastness n. Fastness where Estraven indwelled for two years.

Round-Tower n. 1. Guest house within the Palace of Erhenrang, that suggests a high level of attained shifgrethor.

Royal Embassy n. Karhide Embassy.

Royal Palace see Palace of Erhenrang.

Royal Karhidish Merchants' notes of credit n. United of currency used in Karhide.

royal litter n. carrying couch for royalty.

Royal Mathematician Shorst n. From Karhide NOTE: This may be a group of Mathematicians or simply one, the novel does not specify.

Royal Music n. 1. Music of a Gossiwor. 2. May or may not make Karhide Kings crazy.

Royal Workshop Foundry n. Located in the Artisan School in Karhide. NOTE: May reside in Erhenrang.

russy n. small and aggressive rat-snakes.

S.

S n. Allied world of the Ekumem; where hoolm crops are found.

Saire n. A city on Hain.

Sanovy Religion n. A religion with priests who believe that those who commit crimes will go to other worlds after death.

Sardon rem ir Chenewich Trustworthy Karhider who works at the Royal Embassy in Mishnory, Orgoreyn.

Sarf n. 1. One of the Permanent Bureaus of the Internal Administration that investigates internal affairs; strong ties to the Domination Faction. 2. Harge rem ir Tibe

sarf Org. n. trash

Sarf Faction n. The Domination Faction.

Sassinoth n. A Karhidish town settled in the hills above the Ey River, north of the Sinoth Valley; has the small College of the Trades.

sastrugi n. long snow drift.

The Sayings of Tuhulme the High Priest n. A book of Yomesh Canon.

secher Karh. n. First phase of kemmer, in which a Gethenian's mindset is extremely carnal. See kemmer

Second Envoy n. Second attempt of the Ekumen to ally with a planet.

Second Hour n. 2:30 to 5:00 p.m.

the Seeing n. Yomesh belief that Meshe always clearly saw the past and the future

Sekeve District n. District that Commensal Obsle presides over.

Selemy Org. n. A star in the sky; Hain.

Sembensyen Mountains n. A Mountain range going through Orgoreyn and meeting the Gobrin Glacier.

Sensitives n. Acutely perceptive to Mindspeech.

Sess River n. River flows through Erhenrang; runs through Karhide.

serem-tree. n. Large trees on Gethen.

Seventh Hour n. 2:30 to 5:00 a.m.

Sinnoth Valley n. The valley lands between Orgota and Sassinoth along the Ey River

Sinnoth Valley Administration n. Lordless local government under Karhide rule.

Sinnoth Valley Dispute n. Argument between Karhide and Orgoreny over the Sinnoth Valley. Argaven XIII claimed the Valley for Karhide yet the Orgota Government has never recognized this claim.

Sith n. Nation on Gethen known for its lifewater.

Sithish adj. Of or pertaining to Sith.

Siuwensin n. Orgota district across the Ey River from Karhide.

Sixth hour n. Midnight to 2:30 a.m.

Shath n. Domain and Hearth in a North Karhidish tale involving Getheren of Shath and Hode of Shath.

Sheashel Haven n. An allied world of the Ekumen.

Shelt n. Orgota District across the Gulf of Charisune from Kuseben, Karhide.

Shensey Bogs n. South of the Eserhoth Crags.

shifgrethor n. 1. See analysis. 2. Used throughout Gethen but openly disdained in Orgoreyn. 3. Derived from the word "shadow."

Shorth see Lord of Shorth.

Shusgis see **Commissioner Shusgis of Entry-Roads and Ports**

Skis n. A popular mode of travel across the snowy terrain of Gethen.

Sledge n Large sled, used for transporting loads, with or without wheels usually pulled by animals. ❖trans. v. **sledge, sledges, sledging, sledged** the act of transporting by sledge.

sledge-engine metaphor. Strong.

sledge-meter n. Device on sledge that measures distance.

Solemnity of the Saints and Throne-Upholders n. Yomesh festival

“Some shadows got shorter and some longer.” Karh. cliché. Implies that some Gethenians lose shifgrethor and some gain it.

somer n. The twenty-one to twenty-two day period where the Gethenian reproductive system remains dormant.

somer-kemmer cycle n. Twenty-six to twenty-eight day reproductive/sexual cycle of a Gethenian. For twenty-one to twenty-two days, a Gethenian will remain somer and then around the twenty-second or twenty-third day will start the kemmering phases until the twenty-sixth or twenty-eighth day, when a Gethenian returns to the somer phase.

sonic field n The targeted area of a sonic gun.

sonic gun n. A weapon that can stun or kill through use of sonic waves.

Sordny n. Second day of the month.

Sorve 1. Character of an East Karhidish tale, Lord Sorve. 2. First name of Sorve Harth.

Sorve Harth 1. Heir of Estre after the death of Arek and Estraven of Estre. 2. The child of Arek Harth rem ir Estraven and Therem Harth rem ir Estraven.

sove-snow Karh. n. Thick, wet snow fall. See also, peditia.

Spimolle. G.F. Ekumenical worker that answered King Argavan XV’s question posed to the Stabiles on Hain through ansible.

Spreve n. A place on Gethen. NOTE: Through context, Spreve probably lies somewhere in Karhide, but the text does not explain this.

Stabile n. An Ekumen official stationed on an Ekumenical world.

Star Ships n. An interstellar space ship.

stasis Ct. n. A state of hibernation where an individual’s aging slows dramatically.

Stok n. 1. Domain in Kerm Land, near the Domain of Estre. 2. Domain of the fictional characters Therem of Stok.

Stokven see Therem of Stok.

Streth n. Sixth day of the month.

sube-eggs n. Edible food that is commonly batter-fried.

sugar n. hard, red, earthy-tasting sugar refined from a tuber; usually comes in slabs

suicide n. Most distained man on Gethen; a personal betrayal.

susmy n. Thirteenth month of the year and the second month of Autumn.

T.

Terrenpeth Forest n. A large, unpopulated and organized expanse of thore trees near Turuf, Orgoreyn that stretches to the Gobrín Glacier.

Tekember n. A farming settlement in Karhide in the Sinith Valley border next to the Ey River.

Tenth Hour Karh. n. 9:30 to noon.

Tereponder n. A mountain in Kermland that stands out of the Gobrín Glacier.

Terra n. Allied world of the Ekumen; Earth.

Terran-language n. Earth language; Common tongue.

thangen n. A part of the day where one should remain still. NOTE: This may be associated with the Handdara.

Thangering Fastness n. Fastness in an East Karhidish story that includes characters Lord Berosty rem ir Ipe and Herbor of the Geganner clan.

Thanern Karh. n. Second month of the year and second month of Winter.

Thather n. Port city located at the mouth of River Ench.

the Thaw n. The process of thawing through the Karhide semi-continent that makes transportation difficult; occurs in Karhide throughout the months of Spring, Irrem, Moth, and Tuwa.

Thaw floods n. Natural flooding that occurs during the Thaw in the three Spring months, Irrem, Moth, and Tuwa.

Thener Benth n. Alias Estraven utilized in his plans and follow through of Genly Ai's retrieval from Pulefan Farm.

Therem Harth rem ir Estraven n. 1. Gethenian from the Domain of Estre in Kerm Land. 2. King's ear until exiled from Karhide. 3. Brother to Arek Harth rem ir Estraven. 4. Parent of Sorve Harth.

Therem of Estre n. Character from an East Karhidish story who is the son of Arek of Estre and Therem of Stok and became Lord of Estre and Estraven the Traitor.

Therem of Stok n. Character from an East Karhidish story who vowed kemmering with Arek of Estre, an Enemy, and bore their child, Therem of Estre.

Thern n. 1. Land name of Therem Harth rem ir Estraven. 2. Land name of Therem of Stok from an East Karhidish tale.

Thessicher Karhidish farmer who aided Estraven and Genly Ai when they reached Karhide after their escape from Pulefen Farm.

Thessicher Farm n. Farm located East of the Ey River in the Sinoth Valley that Estraven purchased for Thessicher in an attempt to quell the Sinoth Valley dispute.

“Things are in a bad way.” idiom. Indicating trouble events.

Third District n. see Kuwera.

Third Hour n. 5:00 to 7:00 a.m.

Thirty-three see Government of the Thirty-three

Thirty-three Commensals see the Commensals.

thore n. Shorter gray-needled conifer; most plentiful in the northern regions of Gethen.

thokemmer Karh. n. The third phase of kemmer in which two Gethenians will kemmer.

thorharmen Karh. n. The second phase of kemmer in which a Gethenian’s body will choose a sex.

Tibe see **Pemmer harge rem ir Tibe**

Tienna Orgota resident. NOTE: This name is only briefly mentioned in a conversation of strangers and is never brought up again. I assume he is from Orgoreyn because Orgota talk about him.

time-dividers n. Zanies. NOTE: The text explains that this *may* mean schizophrenics because the Zanies *are* crazy, but this is only Genly’s estimation of this word. However, this may also indicate what particular job the Zanies do when Foretelling.

timejump v. Moving in a ship going faster than light speeds, which drastically slows down time for the passengers. n. the act of timejumping.

Tinibossol One of the Investigators that arrived in Gethen around E.Y. 1448.

Tobord Chorhawa Gethenian who rold Genly Ai the East Karhidish stories that involved Lord Berosty rem ir Ipe and Estraven the Traitor.

Tormenbod Karh. n. The thirteenth day of the month.

Former's Lay n. 1. A Handarrata poem. 2. Poem Estraven recited to Genly Ai.

Town Commerce see the Commerce.

Township n. A settlement in Orgoreyn.

Tower of the Lord-Elect n. 1. In Sassinoth, Karhide 2. Where Genly Ai is imprisoned in Karhide.

Towers of the Un-palace n. A windowless and blood red castle located in Rer, Karhide; built seventeen centuries ago; where the Kings of Karhide lived for a thousand years before Argavan I crossed the Kargav.

Transient-house n. A lodging in Orgoreyn where one can eat or sleep.

traveling players n. A group of actors who move around the countryside.

tribelet n. A small settlement in Karhide.

Tribesman of Perunter n. Commonly thought of as barbaric and may permit incestuous relations between generations.

the Traitor n. Reference to Estraven after he was exiled from Karhide.

Tuerresh n. Location in *The Sayings of Tuhulme the High Priest* where the poor man of Sheney dug in the moraines for jewels.

Tuhulme n. High Priest in Yomesh.

Tulier n. One of eleven Ekumenical agents who waited for Genly Ai's report on the Interstellar Cetian Design NAFAL-20 starship; settled in Erhenrang with Ke'sta upon landing in Karhide.

Tumass Song Angot Thought war to be a masculine displacement activity.

Turuf n. Town in Orgoreyn several miles southwest of Pulefen Farm.

Tuwa Karh. n. Seventh month of the year and the last month of Spring.

U.

Udenushreke n. A Fire-Hill near Turuf, Orgoreyn.

Union of Peoples n. Reference to The Great Commensality of Orgoreyn.

Unit n. Resident

Unshadow n. Weather condition where the snow white ground is the same color as the white sky; dangerous.

untrance n. Self loss through extreme sensual receptiveness and awareness.

Uth Shusgis see **Commissioner Shusgis of Entry-Roads and Ports**

Uttermosts n. Allied world of the Ekumen.

V.

valleys of moraine n. Expanse of glacial residue.

Vanake Slose see **Commensal Slose of the Kuwera District**

voice writer n. 1. Device for writing. 2. Genly Ai's preferred way of note-taking.

the Void Karh. n. Outer space.

Voidish Karh. n. Language of the Void.

Voluntary Farms see **Commensal Voluntary Farm**

vow n. A social and ethical institution of marriage between two Gethenians.

Vow kemmering v. **vows kemmering, vowed kemmering, vowing kemmering** The act of one Gethenian joining another Gethenian in a monogamous marriage, which can only be offered once, but can be broken.

“We can pull a sledge together without being kemmerings.” Esk. cliché. Indicating two Gethenians do not have to be friends to work together.

Weaver n. Center of the circle of Foretellers who translates the chaotic wordless communication between Foretellers while foretelling; accepts or refuses questions from the asker.

Weaver Odren n. Weaver at the Thangering Fastness in the East Karhidish story that includes Lord Berosty rem ir Ipe and Herbor of the Geganner clan.

Wehoth n. A pass on the south side Kargav mountains located at about 14,000 ft.

West Fall n. Valley that Erhenrang resides in.

Western Sea n. The sea bordering Orgoreyn in the west.

wake signal n. Signal sent from a mobile ansible to an interstellar star ship to awaken passengers in stasis.

“When action grows unprofitable, gather information; when information grows unprofitable, sleep.” Ct. cliché. Commonly said in Ekumenical school. NOTE: “Sleep” here may connote the sleep-stasis that one goes into when timejumping, and this make

the sentence about working to ally a world until all options failed, or this could simply indicate the diligence of an Ekumenical agent.

“Where the Thaws do not even begin until Tuwa and everything refreezes.” Karh. cliché. Indicating Tuwa’s extremely cold climate.

Winter Ct. Name the Investigators gave Gethen because of its perpetual winter climate. See also, Winter.

Y.

Year One n. The fixed term for the present year on Gethen. See also, **one ago, one to come**

Yegey see **Commensal Yegey**

Yomesh n. 1. A Gethenian religion started around twenty-two hundred years ago, which includes Priests and temples, believes in the all-knowing and all-understanding Meshe, angels of the Holy, and scorns the Handdara religion. 2. Official religion of the Great Commensality of Orgoreyn. ❖adj. Of or pertaining to Yomesh.

Yomeshta n. A follower of the Yomesh religion.

Yrny Karh. n. Eleventh day of the month.

Z.

Zanies n. Insane Gethenians who participate in Foretelling; time dividers. See time-dividers, time-dividers NOTE

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