

**The T'En Exiles:  
An Exploration of Discrimination and Persecution  
in High Fantasy Novels**

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**Abstract**

High Fantasy is extremely popular, with publication and sales of High Fantasy titles outnumbering Science Fiction for thirty years, yet Fantasy is less respected by reviewers of the Speculative Fiction genre. One reason for this is that High Fantasy often fails to adequately address culturally or politically significant issues. Respected Science Fiction writers, such as Octavia Butler, on the other hand, use the issues such as discrimination and persecution on the basis of race and gender. In my exegesis I explore the ways in which High Fantasy has explored the problems of discrimination and persecution.

In my novel, *The T'En Exiles*, I create a world populated by differently abled races. The 'ordinary' people resent and fear the gifted people, who are less numerous and marginalised. Among the gifted there are those who are aware of mystical powers and those who can manipulate them; because of this a strict hierarchy has evolved. There is also a divide between the genders because the power of the females is expressed differently to that of the males.

In *The T'En Exiles* I use the device of cognitive estrangement, a technique common in both Fantasy and Science Fiction, to examine discrimination and persecution. In particular in terms of how it affects individuals. In the exegesis I examine the ways in which issues of discrimination and persecution are dealt with in contemporary High Fantasy and Science Fiction, and the ways in which a more comprehensive and sensitive treatment of these issues in High Fantasy can address some concerns about the marginalisation of the sub-genre.

**Statement of Authorship**

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contain no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Rowena Cory Lindquist

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## Introduction

I am a genre reader and writer, for which I make no apologies. My genre of choice is Speculative Fiction, which I discovered as a young child while watching *Forbidden Planet*. I was fascinated by the idea that a monster could arise from a person's subconscious, take physical form and attack others, eventually turning on its creator. This concept stimulated my sense of wonder and, from then on, I sought out stories that made me question the underlying assumptions of my very ordinary fibro home and beach-side life.

The second defining event that shaped my reading interests and the direction of my writing was also discovered through television at roughly the same age. A commercial station in the mid-1960s screened a documentary about Auschwitz on a Saturday afternoon. I watched, unable to look away. The graphic footage of bodies being bulldozed into mass graves haunted me for years. As a child, I could not distance myself from the horror of it. They were my family, whose skeletal bodies were being roughly bulldozed into swimming pool-sized holes. At that age I had no idea what being Jewish meant. The word and all its associations were alien to me.

I wanted to understand how people could do such terrible things to other human beings. I sought out books written by Holocaust survivors and, as I read them, began to understand that some people found the differences of race and religion so terrifying that they viewed anyone markedly different from themselves as aliens (inhuman or less than human). At the same time, I continued to read Speculative Fiction, both Science Fiction and Fantasy. I discovered writers, who weren't limited by the mundane world, writers, who sought out aliens not with fear, but with wonder.

In an article on literary Fantasy and genre Fantasy, Keegan includes the following definition of Speculative Fiction, drawing on observations made by the writer and critic Orson Scott Card:

Orson Scott Card, in his 1990 book *How to Write Science Fiction and Fantasy*, presented what is probably the term's most common current definition: "Speculative fiction includes all stories that take place in a setting contrary to known reality." This definition includes all forms of the genres of science fiction and fantasy, and much, if not most, horror. (Keegan, 2006, para 29).

As Keegan makes clear, Speculative Fiction is an umbrella term for Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror. In this thesis I argue that some writers of Science Fiction have explored persecution and discrimination very effectively, and been critically lauded for doing so. Traditionally, however, the sub-genre of Fantasy, particularly High Fantasy has been criticised for its lack of critical engagement with the political implications of its multi-racial casts. I make a distinction here between High Fantasy and other forms of Fantasy, such as literary Fantasy and Low Fantasy.

In her book on genre fiction, *Genreflecting*, Herald breaks Fantasy into seventeen themes and topics (or sub-genres). One of these she names the 'Tolkien Tradition'. Herald describes the 'Tolkien Tradition' or High Fantasy thus:

High fantasy is set in imaginary, secondary worlds, the 'natural' order or laws set by supernatural beings (e.g. gods, fairies). Magical powers abound amongst wizard and magicians, and fantasy flora and fauna provide dragons, unicorns or whatever (Herald 1995, 259)... .

In Orson Scott Card's review of *Meditations on Middle Earth*, (middle earth being the setting for *The Lord of the Rings*) he says:

*Meditations on Middle Earth's* introduction is written by George R.R. Martin in which he comments on the many subsequent fantasy novels that have followed leading up to today following in the *Tolkien tradition* in which he says: It is sometimes called Epic fantasy, sometimes High fantasy, but it ought to be called Tolkienesque fantasy (Card, 2002, para 4 emphasis added).

For the purposes of this exegesis, I use the term High Fantasy to refer to the sub-genre variously described elsewhere as Tolkienesque, Tolkien Tradition or Epic Fantasy. This contemporary sub-genre of Speculative Fiction dates from the initial publication of *The Lord of the Rings* (first published as three volumes between 1954-55) to the present day.

High Fantasy is very popular and reaches a large audience. According to Shea, sales of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy topped 32 million copies between 1965 and 2001. After Peter Jackson's movie *The Lord of the Rings* was released in 2001, another 14 million copies sold in the next two years. (Shea 2006, para 3)

High Fantasy is a very specific publishing phenomenon. These books are usually part of an ongoing series, anything from a duology or trilogy, through to eleven or more books, as in the case of Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series. Although highly popular with readers, the sub-genre is often criticised by commentators such as Disch, who writes:

The first significant subgenre [was] spurred by the success of Ace Books' unauthorised edition of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

trilogy. Tolkien imitations were easier to mass produce than science fiction, since what readers ... wanted was another ride on the same merry-go-round rather than novelty (Disch 1998, 210).

While publishers have been releasing proportionately more Fantasy than Science Fiction and readers have been devouring it, reviewers and lovers of the genre have grown tired of 'another ride on the same merry-go-round'. In a review of three new Fantasy books in the respected *SF Commentary*, Gross says:

For some time now, I have been fond of saying that I don't like 'generic' fantasy. What I mean by 'generic' is fantasy that is usually set in a medieval-type world and is often epic in scale, covering many volumes (often the dreaded trilogy), and containing stock, often-used characters and ingredients, such as magicians or wizards, priests, demons, witches, singers, oracles, prophecies and the like. Often, as in Tolkien, the plot is based on a cosmic battle between good and evil. I tend to avoid endless series that seem to be no more than clones of Tolkien and other classical epic fantasies (Gross 2003, 38).

Gross is not the only one who has tired of generic High Fantasies. In an article on characterisation in Peter Jackson's film *The Lord of the Rings* Garcia cites China Mieville:

Tolkien is the wen on the arse of fantasy literature. His oeuvre is massive and contagious—you can't ignore it, so don't even try. The best you can do is consciously try to lance the boil. And there's a lot to dislike—his cod-Wagnerian pomposity, his boys-own-adventure glorying in war, his small-minded and reactionary love for hierarchical status-quos, his belief in absolute morality that blurs moral and political complexity. .... He wrote that the function of fantasy was 'consolation', thereby making it an article of policy that a fantasy writer should mollycoddle the reader (Mieville, PanMacmillan).

Garcia goes on to argue that:

Miéville condemns what he considers regressive fantasies of a pastoral paradise that never was ("feudalism lite", he mocks). It is no surprise that one of his favorite quotations comes from Moorcock: "Jailers love escapism. What they hate is escape" (Garcia 2004, 2-3).

Critics like Mieville, Gross, Garcia and their ilk have variously accused High Fantasy of being derivative, escapist and commercial, with limited characterisation, because it does not challenge the reader by exploring culturally relevant or significant topics such as discrimination and persecution.

Well-known and widely respected author, Ursula K Le Guin addressed this widespread bias against Fantasy in a speech to the Children's literature Breakfast at Book Expo America. Le Guin says:

While fantasy can indeed be mere escapism, wish-fulfilment, indulgence in empty heroics, and brainless violence, it isn't so by definition — and shouldn't be treated as if it were. Fantasy is a literature particularly useful for embodying and examining the real difference between good and evil. In an America where our reality may seem degraded to posturing patriotism and self-righteous brutality, imaginative literature continues to question what heroism is, to examine the roots of power, and to offer moral alternatives. Imagination is the instrument of ethics. There are many metaphors besides battle, many choices besides war, and most ways of doing good do not, in fact, involve killing anybody. Fantasy is good at thinking about those other ways (Le Guin 2004, para 13 -14)

According to Le Guin, Fantasy can be used for - indeed is good for - exploring the roots of power, the 'question of heroism' and offering 'moral alternatives'. This is what Le Guin attempted in the *Earthsea* Quartet. In the first book of the *Earthsea* series she set out to address racial prejudice by creating characters, which range from ebony black, through brown and red to white. As I argue later in this paper, her attempts to address the problems of racial representation were only partially successful.

Science Fiction has also explored discrimination and persecution. Indeed, like Fantasy, the genre is ideally situated to do so. Cranny-Francis argues:

The Convention of estrangement (Darko Suvin calls science fiction the literature of cognitive estrangement), for example, enables writers to displace the story setting to another time and/or place,

immediately denaturalizing the society portrayed in the text and the events and characters set there. So reader and writers are freed from the restrictions of contemporary practises (cited in Barr 1993, 4).

Using the genre of Science Fiction, the 'literature of cognitive estrangement', authors have explored various social and cultural aspects of discrimination and persecution.

In *Aliens and Others*, for example, Wolmark discusses Margaret Atwood's near-future dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale*:

In the novel, Atwood draws a parallel between our current society and the near-future society of Gilead. She uses the genre of Science Fiction to explore the discrimination and persecution of women. Other works, such as *The Shore of Women* by Pamela Sargent and *The Gate to Women's Country* by Sherri Tepper, "share a concern with the contradictory and unequal relations within which women and men are positioned as subjects" (Wolmark 1993, 88).

In *Aliens and Others*, Wolmark discusses the work of Octavia Butler and Gwyneth Jones, writers who use the genre of Speculative Fiction to hold a distorted mirror to our society using 'cognitive estrangement' so that we can see ourselves more clearly:

[they] use the science fiction metaphor of the alien to explore the way in which deeply divisive dichotomies of race and gender are embedded in the repressive structures and relations of dominance and subordination (Wolmark 1993, 27).

These authors use the denaturalisation of Science Fiction to create worlds, and people them with characters that are alien, but also have recognisably human traits that readers can relate to, causing them to identify with the protagonists and question attitudes they might otherwise take for granted in current society.

High Fantasy writers 'displace the story setting' by creating fictional worlds, cultures and characters. By removing familiar or 'real world' racial categories - such as Muslim, Jew or Black - using instead 'created' or fictional cultural and racial differences the author denaturalises the social context and history of discrimination and persecution, engaging the reader in a world in which their own pre-conditioned expectations of racial characteristics and interactions are suspended. As the characters experience persecution, whether this persecution arises around the perceived and actual differences in race, ethnicity or ability, the reader can identify with them through the process of immersion. The effects of persecution are experienced vicariously by the reader.

These books are set in created worlds, which are often a variation on medieval Europe. In the best High Fantasy novels these worlds are well-researched and detailed: the books usually contain maps and, often, genealogies of the characters, as in George RR Martin's best selling *Fire and Ice* series. In Ordway's paper on *The World-Building of Guy Gavriel Kay*, she says:

One of the most notable aspects of fantasy literature is its creation of a secondary world, not like our own primary world. ... What I have set out to do in this paper is to explore some of the ways that fantasist Guy Gavriel Kay has gone about creating a "secondary world" and investing it with the consistency of reality. Kay's work is notable in that he makes extensive use of sources from what Tolkien would call the "primary world": Kay draws on literature, mythology, and history as well as his own imagination to create the worlds of his fantasy novels. (Ordway, 1998, paras1,2).

By creating a density of world building using maps and genealogies High Fantasy authors strive to create 'suspension of disbelief'. This occurs when the reader is willing to suspend their disbelief in magic or the supernatural, and engross themselves in the world of the story. High Fantasy writers such as Guy Gavriel Kay,

George RR Martin, David B Coe, Sharon Shinn and Mercedes Lackey use maps, genealogies and a high level of detail, to attain more than mere suspension of disbelief. Their works immerse the reader in the book, its world and characters.

Immersion is a term also used in the computer gaming field. As Andrew Rollings and Ernest Adams say in their text book, *Game Design*:

When you go inside a game world and temporarily make it your reality, you suspend your disbelief. The better the game supports the illusion, the more thoroughly engrossed you become, and then the more *immersive* we say the game is. Immersiveness is one of the holy grails of game design (Rollings and Adams 2003, 58).

Immersion in a literary world is often felt through identification with character. These characters must be well rounded and believable and their motivations understood so that the reader can sympathise/empathise with them. This only arises if the world building and characterisation are done well. Immersion is the holy grail of many High Fantasy writers. When I write I set out to totally immerse the reader in the world I create. When this is successful the dangers to the protagonist feel real because the reader has immersed themselves in the world of the story and identifies with the protagonist. In *The T'En Exiles* it is my goal to induce the reader to identify with the protagonist so that when I explore the impact of discrimination and persecution on the character, the reader will 'feel' what they feel and, perhaps, question their own assumptions about racial/cultural superiority.

Discrimination and persecution of people on the basis of colour, race, religious or political beliefs, culminating in mass murder, received extensive public attention in the twentieth century, specifically in relation to the Holocaust. This led to the coining of the word 'genocide':

Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and a Polish Jew, coined the word genocide in 1944. It is a combination of a Greek word *genos*

(meaning "race," "group," or "tribe") and a Latin ending *cide* (meaning "killing") (Rossel 2003, para 1).

The *United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities*, cites Toynbee:

that the distinguishing characteristics of the twentieth century in evolving the development of genocide 'are that it is committed in cold blood by the deliberate fiat of holders of despotic political power, and that the perpetrators of genocide employ all the resources of present-day technology and organization to make their planned massacres systematic and complete' (Toynbee 1969).

With the lives lost to genocide running into the millions, one and a half million Armenians, six million Jews in the Second World War, two million Cambodians (The History Place, 2007, 1), to name three instances of genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; these tragedies have touched many survivors.

Discrimination and persecution have been explored in the media, in films like *Schindler's List*, and in many books by Holocaust survivors, such as *In My Hands* by Irene Gut Opdyke and Jennifer Armstrong, *Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank, and *Return to Auschwitz* by Kitty Hart.

High Fantasy, a sub-genre of Speculative Fiction, is particularly well suited to an exploration of these issues. While many High Fantasy books are set in traditional worlds with a range of stock racial characters and cultures, if the writer creates their own races and cultures the readers of their High Fantasy novel will enter this world without pre-existing negative (or positive) expectations of these races and cultures. In this way the writer of High Fantasy can invite readers to examine and explore the causes, consequences and effects of discrimination and persecution free of the limiting preconceptions readers bring to realist fiction.

**Discrimination and persecution in High Fantasy – from *The Lord of The Rings* to *Heart of the Mirage***

In the multi-racial, multi-gendered and radically differently-abled populations of many High Fantasy novels, the real-world experiences of discrimination and persecution have often been ignored or downplayed. Early works, such as Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, established a set of traditions in which the lived effects of discrimination and persecution were either grossly simplified or ignored, or – in some later novels – exploited for their potential to incite conflict. While some writers have continued to mine Tolkien's work, others such as Shinn, Kay and Berg have used the High Fantasy genre to explore the consequences of discrimination and persecution.

In this section of the thesis, I explore the ways in which High Fantasy novelists have exploited and explored the potential of their colourful worlds, and draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of various writing techniques and strategies for exploring and exposing the imperialist tradition of the genre.

**Revelation: resolving conflict through spiritual intervention**

In the book that spawned its own sub-genre, Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, the characters inhabit Middle Earth, an invented world where there are many races: men, hobbits, dwarves, ents (talking trees), orcs and wild men from the south, as well as magically-gifted people: elves. There is plenty of scope in this 'multicultural' world for exploration of discrimination and persecution.

Tolkien establishes a mood of racial intolerance between the dwarves and elves. Despite their historic and personal animosity towards each other the elf, Legolas, and dwarf Gimli agree to accompany Frodo on his quest to destroy the ring. After fighting side by side to escape from the orcs and the Balrog in the mines of Moria I would have thought any lingering wariness had been tested and overcome before they entered Lothlorien but Legolas and Gimli remain estranged. This is made clear when the elf guards of Lothlorien want Gimli to wear a blindfold. Instead of vouching for him, or offering to wear a blindfold as well, Legolas objects when Aragorn says they will all be blindfolded. "I am an Elf and a Kinsman" (Tolkien 2001, 339) he says, insisting on his right to racial privilege, and implicitly refusing to offer any filial support for Gimli. Twenty-four pages later, after spending one month in the elves' home, Legolas and Gimli: "had now become fast friends" (Tolkien 2001, 363).

This significant shift in Legolas and Gimli's cross-racial friendship occurs very quickly. Tolkien does not show a gradual growth of trust and friendship or a pivotal event that transforms their relationship from animosity to filial loyalty and mutual respect. Instead, during their time in Lothlorien, Gimli encounters the elf, Lady Galadriel, and experiences a kind of spiritual revelation:

She looked upon Gimli, who sat glowering and sad, and she smiled. And the Dwarf, hearing the names given in his ancient

tongue, looked up and met her eyes; and it seemed to him that he looked suddenly into the heart of an enemy and saw there love and understanding. Wonder came into his face, and then he smiled in answer (Tolkien 2001, 347).

Here, Gimli has a semi-mystical experience of empathy with the elf Galadriel and – by extension – with the elven race. Gimli's complex feelings of resentment and distrust towards the elven race are resolved through a kind of 'vision' in which the Goddess-like Galadriel reveals her love and understanding of Gimli. This one-sided revelation underlines and reinforces some of the implicit racial 'classing' of Tolkien's novel, in which more human and beautiful races – such as the elves and humans – are clearly represented as higher beings than others, such as the dwarves. It is Gimli whose heart must be opened to the 'wonder' of the mystical and beautiful elves; Legolas, being elven, has no need to be seen to understand the lowly dwarf. Tolkien resolves the racial intolerance between elf and dwarf using a one-sided magical revelation. There is no exploration of the change in feelings on Legolas's part, nor of the ways in which Gimli's revelation are played out in his own change of heart.

A similar magical revelation is used in David Weber's book *The War God's Own*. When Bahzell, one of the hated hadrani, is chosen by the war God to act as his Champion the rest of the war God's Order resent this, so much so that Vaijon challenges Bahzell to a duel. As the duel progresses it becomes clear that Bahzell could easily kill the challenger but refrains from doing so. At this point, the war God himself appears:

another armed and armoured figure flicked suddenly into existence behind Bahzell. The newcomer stood at least ten feet tall, brown haired and brown eyed, with a sword on his back and a mace at his belt, and the deep, bass thunder of his words made even Bahzell's powerful voice sound light as a child's.

Sir Charrow [head of the Order] went instantly to one knee followed just as quickly by every other person (Weber 1998, 71).

With the appearance of the war God all the members of the Order experience a change of heart; instead of hating Bahzell because he is hradani, they accept him because their god has accepted him. While Webber sets up an interesting conflict between the two races, which could have explored the effects of discrimination on the persecuted individual as well as those who do the persecuting. He resolves this conflict in one scene with the appearance of the Order's god. As a reader and fellow writer I found this disappointing because Vaijon, the character who challenged Bahzell to the duel, was good hearted, despite being racially intolerant. I anticipated that Weber would take Bahzell and Vaijon on a physical journey which would mirror Vaijon's journey of emotional growth as he got to know Bahzell and overcame his prejudice against the hradrani race. By resolving the non-hradranis' resentment with a magical revelation, Weber was able to plunge his characters into an adventure story. Because the theme of his book was not the growth of friendship and overcoming of prejudice, he used the magical revelation as a plot device to remove an impediment to his story's flow.

### **Discrimination as the basis of socio-political conflict**

Persecution and discrimination are often used as a source of plot conflict in High Fantasy books. In Kate Forsyth's *Witches of Eileanen* series, it is King James' persecution of witches that prompts the witches and their friends to flee Scotland.

Though the witches were once a respected part of society, the majority of people without magical ability are quick to turn on them when the King does. Forsyth's narrative does not provide a gradual build up of misunderstanding, fear and suspicion, which the King taps into when he declares his pogrom on witches. Instead,

the book explores the consequences of a sudden shift such as that described by Beck in *Prisoners of Hate*:

During periods of social change and economic upheaval, people are more amenable to adopting a paranoid perspective, if that is communicated by an authority (Beck 1999, 150).

Forsyth uses persecution of differently-abled people - witches and warlocks - as a plot device to create conflict, rather than as a way of exploring how this affects the characters.

Persecution is also used as a source of conflict in Andre Norton and Mercedes Lackey's *The Elven Bane*. There are three races: the down-trodden, enslaved humans; the magically-gifted elves (who are masters of the humans); and the sentient, magically gifted dragons, who observe but rarely interact with the elves. We are told any sign of magical ability in humans is weeded out (through selective genocide) and interbreeding between humans and elves is forbidden. Yet a half-breed child is born and raised by a dragon. The mother dragon comes to see the child as a person. The adopted human child resents the attitudes of the rest of the dragons (Kin) towards humans:

They were just like the elven lords in that, she thought, angrily... They didn't care about anything or anyone else, and any other race was somehow inferior to them. Even though the Kin had been driven out of Home, they had no feelings for creatures who suffered the slavery they had escaped (Lackey and Norton 1991, 103).

This child goes on to acquire great powers, raise an army and defeat the elves with the help of the dragons, who re-think their attitude of non-interference. In *The Elven Bane* discrimination, persecution and genocide of magically-gifted humans are the motivating factors for the plot's conflicts and differences are resolved through confrontation.

**Discrimination as the basis of moral or personal conflict**

A more thorough examination of persecution and discrimination is explored in Mercedes Lackey's book *Exile's Honor*. Alberich, a soldier of Karse, has the magical gift of fore-sight. But Karsite priests hate people with magical gifts:

That was a witch-power, and forbidden by the Voices of the One God. If anyone knew he had it [he would face] The Fires and the Cleansing (Lackey, 2002, 15).

When Alberich's magic is discovered he is saved from execution by a sentient, magically-gifted horse and taken to Valdemar, his country's sworn enemy. This creates an interesting conflict; his own people have tried to kill him while his enemies have offered him protection. At first Alberich distrusts the inhabitants of Valdemar because of the lies he has been told by his own people. Gradually, he comes to believe that their form of government is preferable to Karse's and he grows to admire them.

Lackey goes on to use the discrimination and persecution her protagonist faced in his homeland to set up moral conflict. Alberich eventually attains a high position of trust in Valdemar and, when Karse invades Valdemar, he must justify breaking his Karsite soldier's vow to save his adopted people. This presents an interesting character arc for the protagonist and integrates the theme of persecution into the subtext of the story.

The theme of persecution is also embedded in the subtext of Sharon Shinn's *Mystic and Rider*. When a small troupe of Mystics is sent to spy for the King, two of the King's Riders are ordered to protect them. The general public's attitude towards Mystics ranges from acceptance through mild suspicion to paranoid distrust and fear. As one character explains:

Some parts of the country are very receptive to the idea of magic, and in the royal city, mystics live quite openly. And a few of the twelve Houses [aristocracy] tolerate them, even among their own heirs. But in many places – especially in the south - it can be worth your life to be discovered (Shinn 2005, 14).

The troupe are attacked several times and the Riders protect the Mystics, but more often than not the Riders are forced to rely on the Mystics to help them, thus developing trust and respect for the differently-abled people. Gradually, the Riders overcome their wariness and, by the end of the book, Tayse, the King's Rider, has fallen in love with the leader of the Mystics. Shinn uses the narrative to explore questions of trust and prejudice. By sending the non Mystics (Riders) and the Mystics on a physical journey of discovery, Shinn leads the characters through a personal journey of growth and discovery as they confront their preconceived fears and mistrust, eventually overcoming these to see the 'alien' as fully human.

This is also the theme of Carol Berg's *Transformation*. I found the first half of the book fascinating. The gradual exploration of the relationship between the heir of a brutal soldier aristocracy and his slave, a survivor of a subjugated people, whose magical abilities have been eradicated by torture, kept me turning the pages. Through a series of encounters the Lord learns to respect his slave's opinion and, eventually, to question slavery so much so, that he frees his slave and the two of them escape the city. In the first half of *Transformation* Berg explores the dynamics of persecution through her characters' gradual development of trust and respect.

Exploration of persecution and discrimination through characterisation is what sets Guy Gavriel Kay's stand-alone High Fantasy novel, *The Lions of Al-Rassan*, apart from others. He creates three different cultures with their own religions; these cultures share a painful history of persecution and war. The plot draws inspiration from the medieval Spanish story of Cid. The Spanish Christians are used as

inspiration for the Jaddites, worshipers of the sun, the worshipers of the stars known as Asharites are based on the Moors, and the Kindath are based on the Jews. The cruelty of the Asharites is established when the reader learns how a Kindath doctor was blinded and had his tongue cut out for performing surgery on an Asharite woman to save her life and the life of her unborn child.

The narrative follows key sympathetic characters from each of these cultures as their country descends into war. Because his protagonists are well-rounded characters, Kay draws the reader into their moral dilemmas. A good example of this is where Jaddite, Roger Belmonte's son, is wounded and it looks as if he will die of a fractured skull. A Kindath doctor, who has been tortured (and would be justified in refusing to help) performs surgery on the boy, saving his life. As Ordway says: 'it hints at the possibility of peaceful interaction among the three embattled religious groups' (Ordway, 1998, para 46). By the end of the book Alvar de Pellino, originally a Jaddite soldier, has converted to the Kindath religion and befriended an Asharite. Ordway argues that this: 'shows the reader just how much one's perspective may change through experience' (Ordway, 1998, para 49).

Kay's *The Lions of Al-Rassan* is a good example of an author using High Fantasy to explore discrimination and persecution. According to Ordway: 'The reader gets to experience the Jaddite victory through the perceptions of characters who have ties to both sides, and so the complexities of the reconquest are brought home' (Ordway, 1998, para 47).

Of all these books Kay's novel uses 'cognitive estrangement' to the fullest, creating societies based on familiar cultures but changing details and giving them new names, then inviting the reader to sympathise with characters from all three societies as they experience the lived, daily realities of discrimination and persecution.

Discrimination and persecution are being used as sources of conflict for High Fantasy plots, where this conflict is resolved through magical means such as in *The Lord of the Rings* or *The War God's Own*, or confrontation as in *The Elven Bane* or *Exile's Honor*, or explored through characterisation – as is the case in works such as *The Lions of Al-Rassan*.

More often than not, High Fantasy writers use the tropes of the genre to build worlds that could be called 'feudalism lite'. Discrimination and persecution are a source of conflict in many of the plots of these novels, rather than leaping-off points for explorations of the personal and cultural consequences of discrimination. However, writers like Shinn and Berg have explored the effects of discrimination and persecution, revealing how their characters overcome prejudice by sharing their daily experiences.

If the genocide of Armenians, Jews and Koreans coloured the way we view the twentieth century, then '9-11' has already coloured the way we live in the twenty-first century. In a world where governments regularly issue terrorist alerts for citizens travelling abroad, the consequences of interaction between people of different religious and cultural backgrounds cannot be ignored. Even High Fantasy is maturing and beginning to more thoughtfully deal with topical issues that concern us.

**Case Study One: *The Earthsea Trilogy***

Ursula K Le Guin's *Earthsea* Trilogy was written over a period of nearly forty years. The first book – *A Wizard of Earthsea* – appeared in 1968, *The Tombs of Atuan* in 1972, and *The Farthest Shore* in 1973. An anthology of stories – *Tales from Earthsea Collection* – was published in 2002 and *The Other Wind* in 2003.

The *Earthsea* books are iconic works of High Fantasy, and Le Guin is one of the genres most highly regarded authors. As Disch writes:

The most successful, and the most significant, feminist presence in the SF field has undoubtedly been that of Ursula K Le Guin ... She's won five Hugos and four Nebulas, and she commands an unrivalled respect in those academic circles that pay attention to the genre (Disch 1998, 124-125).

The *Earthsea* series is set on a series of archipelagos (one stretch alone is called The Ninety Isles). The societies on these islands are recognisable variations on Western feudal societies, though they are inhabited by sapient dragons, and the people range from ordinary humans to magically-gifted witches and wizards. There

are people of every colour from ebony black, through red-brown to fair-skinned blonds. Le Guin consciously chose to use people of different colour, though she was aware of the dangers of doing so:

So far no reader of color has told me I ought to butt out, or that I got the ethnicity wrong. When they do, I'll listen. As an anthropologist's daughter, I am intensely conscious of the risk of cultural or ethnic imperialism—a white writer speaking for nonwhite people, co-opting their voice, an act of extreme arrogance. In a totally invented fantasy world, or in a far-future science fiction setting, in the rainbow world we can imagine, this risk is mitigated. That's the beauty of science fiction and fantasy—freedom of invention (Le Guin 2004, para 12).

Here, Le Guin demonstrates that she is aware of a possible backlash against a white writer representing non-white characters in her novels, but argues that the risks of appropriation and cultural imperialism are 'mitigated' in writing High Fantasy, which allows her: 'the freedom of invention'.

The first book of the *Earthsea* series, *A Wizard of Earthsea*, was published in 1968. The 1960s were a period of social upheaval in the USA, when Blacks and liberal Whites protested for Black rights. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Le Guin created a world where there was a mix of skin colours. According to Le Guin, this was a deliberate strategy:

I didn't see why everybody in science fiction had to be a honky named Bob or Joe or Bill. I didn't see why everybody in heroic fantasy had to be white (and why all the leading women had "violet eyes"). It didn't even make sense. Whites are a minority on Earth now—why wouldn't they still be either a minority, or just swallowed up in the larger colored gene pool, in the future? The fantasy tradition I was writing in came from Northern Europe, which is why it was about white people. I'm white, but not European. My people could be any color I liked, and I like red and brown and black. I was a little wily about my color scheme. I figured some white kids (the books were published for "young adults") might not identify straight off with a brown kid, so I kind of eased the information about skin color in by degrees — hoping that the reader would get 'into Ged's skin' and only then discover it wasn't a white one (Le Guin 2004, paras 7,8).

In an attempt to defy convention, she gave her fantasy characters skin tones ranging from ebony-black through red-brown to white. Le Guin believed there would be resistance from white readers to empathising with non-white characters, so chose to engage the reader in the story, in particular with the protagonist, Ged, before revealing his skin colour or that of the other characters.

[Vetch] had the accent of the East Reach, and was very dark of skin, not red-brown like Ged and Jasper and most folk of the Archipelago, but black-brown (Le Guin 1993, 43 - 44).

This is the first mention of Ged's skin colour. The fact that Vetch has dark skin has no bearing on his character development, the way others interact with him, or his chances of achieving success in his chosen profession.

Le Guin's use of different skin colours for her characters had, however, a marked effect on real people in the real world. According to Le Guin, her Black readers reacted well, applauding her for this break with convention. She writes:

I have heard, not often, but very memorably, from readers of color who told me that the *Earthsea* books were the only books in the genre that they felt included in — and how much this meant to them, particularly as adolescents, when they'd found nothing to read in fantasy and science fiction except the adventures of white people in white worlds. Those letters have been a tremendous reward and true joy to me (Le Guin 2004, para 12).

While Le Guin's characters did not suffer from racial discrimination or persecution in the *Earthsea* series, the publishing industry did not greet her attempt to break the white tradition of High Fantasy with open arms. According to Le Guin:

I had endless trouble with cover art. Not on the great cover of the first edition — a strong, red-brown profile of Ged — or with Margaret Chodos Irvine's four fine paintings on the Atheneum hardcover set, but all too often. The first British *Wizard* was this pallid, droopy, lily-like guy — I screamed at sight of him.

Gradually I got a little more clout, a little more say-so about covers. And very, very, very gradually publishers may be beginning to lose their blind fear of putting a non-white face on the cover of a book. 'Hurts sales, hurts sales' is the mantra. Yeah, so? On my books, Ged with a white face is a lie, a betrayal — a betrayal of the book, and of the potential reader (Le Guin 2004, paras 9,10).

Le Guin sought to challenge the accepted practice of using white protagonists in fantasy and her readers accepted this, but the design and marketing departments of publishing houses, and the producers of the *Earthsea* mini-series, were not so eager to embrace a coloured protagonist:

In the film, he's [Ged] a petulant white kid ... They [the producers] sent me several versions of the script—and told me that shooting had already begun. I had been cut out of the process. And just as quickly, race, which had been a crucial element, had been cut out of my stories. In the miniseries, Danny Glover is the only man of color among the main characters (although there are a few others among the spear-carriers) (Le Guin 2004, paras 1, 5).

While the question of racial discrimination in the genre of High Fantasy is addressed in Le Guin's book through the creation of a multi-coloured but non-discriminatory world, issues of gender politics are depicted in a less utopian manner. Negative attitudes towards women's magic are established in book one, where the narrator says, "There is a saying in Gont, *Weak as woman's magic*, and there is another saying, *Wicked as woman's magic*" (Le Guin 1993, 16). Institutionalised gender discrimination is also represented: only males can attend the School of Roke where wizards are trained.

In *Tehanu*, Therru is a young female child who has been raped and badly burned by her guardians. As a character, she embodies and represents the cruelty of males to the powerless and how *Earthsea* has become out of balance. An older woman, Tenar, takes in the burned child and raises her. Tenar featured as a child and

adolescent in *The Tombs of Atuan*. There she was a high priestess who escaped from her servitude to the Nameless Ones (old dark gods) and remade herself, with Ged's help. Because of her fame she could have held a high position in court, instead she chose to marry Farmer Flint and raise two children. In *Tehanu*, Tenar's children have left home, her husband is dead and she is called to see Wizard Ongin through his death.

After Ongin's death, two officials come to bury him. The first is a young wizard who serves the local Lord, the second is an older wizard from Gont Port. The men argue about which place will have the honour of burying Ongin. Tenar tells them that the old wizard wished to be buried where he lies, on the side of the hill above his home:

Both men looked at her. The young man, seeing a *middle aged village woman*, simply turned away. The man from Gont Port started a moment and he said, 'Who are you?'

'I'm called Flint's window, Goha,' she said. 'Who I am is your business to know, I think. But not mine to say.'

At this the wizard of Re Albi found her worthy of a brief stare. 'Take care, woman, how you speak to men of power' (Le Guin 1993, 504 - 505, emphasis added).

Here, Le Guin reveals the attitude of men in power towards women. In Earthsea, witches are despised and their skills sought only by peasants, while wizards attend a respected school and serve Lords and Kings. The difference between men's and women's power is seen as natural by men indoctrinated by the patriarchal values of their magical world and even sympathetic misogynistic characters like Ged, who reflects:

No woman can be Archmage. She'd unmake what she became in becoming it. The Mages of Roke are men – their power is the power of men, their knowledge is the knowledge of men. Both manhood and magery are built on one rock: power that belongs to

men. If women had power, what would men be but women who can't bear children? And what would women be but men who can? (Le Guin 1993, 664)

When the story closes, Therru, the burned child, discovers she has an affinity with dragons. Through this relationship she transcends the limitations of gender and it is hinted that she will become the next Archmage of Roke. Le Guin has thoroughly immersed the reader in the colour-blind but patriarchal world in which Ged and Tenar live and invites the reader to consider the natural and cultural differences between men and women.

Le Guin set out to address the absence of non-white skin colour in High Fantasy via the *Earthsea* series by creating a utopian world where differences in skin colour did not impact on a character's chances of succeeding in their chosen profession. In doing so she was speaking/writing back to a genre whose history, from the publication of *Lord of the Rings*, was a history of whiteness, or thinly-veiled imperialist nations in which whites had power and other races – orcs, dwarves, witches – were either lesser beings, or incontrovertibly evil. Le Guin's depiction of a multi-racial utopia was a radical and politically-charged tactic at the time, when merely to represent non-white characters in High Fantasy as powerful and/or good was new, and drew attention to the whiteness of the genre's history. Le Guin's treatment of gender-based discrimination and persecution is somewhat more complex, particularly in the later books of the series, where the lived realities of a world where there is a long-standing tradition of cultural, social and political gender discrimination are shown. While *Wizard of Earthsea* is typical – even archetypal – in following the quest narrative of a young male wizard's journey to power and self-actualisation, later books in the series develop a more complex and critical engagement with the play of power – of persecution and discrimination – in the gender-biased cultures of Earthsea.

### Case Study Two: *Heart of the Mirage*

In *Heart of the Mirage* Glenda Larke has crafted a first person narrative that explores the consequences of being taken from your culture and raised in another culture, then returned. She touches on issues such as discrimination, persecution, genocide and sexism.

Le Guin was motivated to write *Earthsea* with coloured protagonists because she “didn't see why everybody in heroic fantasy had to be a honky” (Le Guin 2004, para 7). In the acknowledgments to *Heart of the Mirage*, Larke explains how the basic premise for her new series *The Mirage Makers*, arose:

Many years ago, when my own children were very young, I heard for the first time two stories, from opposite sides of the globe. One told the tragedy of stolen babies raised by those who had murdered their mothers, inevitably indoctrinated with the very beliefs their true parents died resisting, the second story, equally tragic and just as true, told how several generations of children were forcibly taken from their loving, caring families to be raised by strangers. They were told to forget who they had been and where they had

come from, to forget their language, their culture and their people; indeed to denigrate their origins.

Ligea's story is my way of saying sorry to all those mothers and their children: my way of paying homage to Los desaparecidos, the Disappeared Ones of Argentina, and the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Australia (Larke 2006, 496).

In *Heart of the Mirage* the protagonist is a brown-skinned woman, the adopted daughter of a general. Their society, Tyr, is loosely based on Roman civilisation. When the story opens she uses her Tyranian name, Ligea. But as the story unfolds she uses other names, Derya (a slave), Shirrin (lost sister), Sarana (kidnapped heir). The changes of her name reflect the various cultural and personal changes she undergoes and her growth as a person.

*Heart of the Mirage* explores discrimination and persecution in the forms of slavery, oppression, genocide, gender discrimination and fear of differently-abled people (those with magic). The author uses 'cognitive estrangement' (Barr 1993, 4) in carrying the reader to a new world - an empire called Tyr - and a conquered land called Kardiastan. Both societies are recognisably drawn from earth cultures: Tyr is based on Rome and Kardiastan could be Afghanistan.

Ligea is the daughter of the ruler of Kardiastan. Her people (the magically-gifted nobles) were wiped out, except for ten children who were not present when the massacre occurred. As a child of three, Ligea was taken to Tyr and reared by her people's conquerors. She grows to love her adopted father, the General, as well as the capital with its Halls of Justice, Public Library and Academy of Learning, all symbols of the Tyran civilisation. She takes pride in being a citizen of Tyr, with all its wonderful inventions, art and society.

When Ligea was ten she was given a boy slave of twelve, Brand. He went to all her lessons with her and received the same education and, although she values his

opinion, she can only see Brand as a slave. She was raised by a Kardi slave, Aemid, who taught her to speak her birth language. When Ligea learns that Aemid was forced to leave a small son behind she is horrified.

I was immeasurably shocked ... 'But it is not permitted for slaves to be separated from their young children!'

'Perhaps that's what the law says, but who cares about the words of the law in the chaos following a conquest? A woman sells better without encumbrances' (Larke 2006, 61).

This is an example of how Larke introduces information which conflicts with her protagonist's world view. Gradually, these conflicts force Ligea to question the very foundation of her belief system.

Raised by the General from the age of three, Ligea mourns his death and is eager to prove her worth to the Brotherhood, spies who do the dirty-work of the Empire. Ligea agrees to go back to Kardiastan when the Ruler of Tyr and her Brotherhood boss, Rathrox, ask her to discover who the leader of the uprising is and kill him.

When he hears she has to go to Kardiastan on a secret mission Ligea's lover, one of the Stalwarts: the legionnaires of Tyr, urges her to give up the Brotherhood and marry him:

He gave a quick frown. 'How can I feel happy with it? It's dangerous. It's not work for a woman. It's -'

I interrupted. 'It's what keeps me alive, Favonius. I need excitement and challenge. But because I'm a woman I'm not allowed to be a legionnaire or a seamaster or a trademaster of anything else adventurous or challenging. So I work for the Brotherhood. You would take that away from me if I were your wife - then wonder why I was no longer the woman you had fallen in love with' (Larke 2006, 53).

Having only lived in Tyr's capital, Kardiastan is an eye-opener for Ligea. When she sees examples of Tyranians' mistreatment of locals, breaking laws she believed were honoured, she is shocked. While disguised as a local, she sees a slave child killed by legionnaires. On returning to her quarters she writes a note to the commander about this and sends her slave, Brand, to deliver it:

He gave a cynical snort. 'You won't change anything with this note. Haven't you learned yet that any society practicing slavery is innately unjust? When you have the power to make a freeman a chattel to be bought and sold, then it is you – not the slave – who loses humanity: you who become less than what a man or woman should be. The system is marginally less arbitrary in Tyr simply because lesser men like those legionnaires are not at the top of the midden heap there, here they are near the bottom' (Larke 2006, 138, 139).

Brand continually confronts Ligea, forcing her to question her beliefs. She is further confronted when she realises that the man she serves, Rathorex, the leader of the Brotherhood organised the mass murder of Kardi nobles with the support of her adoptive father, the General.

While dressed as a slave, she meets her relative, the leader of the rebellion, and falls in love with him. Believing that she is a slave, he helps her escape and takes her to his people. Ligea finds much to admire in the Kardi and is torn between her loyalty to Tyr, and her growing belief that the Kardi people deserve to be freed from the oppression of Tyr:

I was happier when a compeer [Tyrian noble] was all I was. I was arrogant, cruel even, but at least I was never as uncertain and muddled and miserable as I am now (Larke 2006, 434).

Larke shows, here, the emotional conflict Ligea undergoes as her political and cultural ideas – taught to her by the General and until now accepted as truth – are thrown into crisis. Growth and change are painful. It is easy for a person to fix on one set of values through which they interpret the world. When those assumptions and

values are proven to be wrong as Larke has Ligea discover once she reaches Kardistan, then the person/character is forced to grow and mature. As a fellow writer, I find this kind of personal growth in a character interesting and admire the skill with which Larke builds up to Ligea's change of heart.

Ligea knows the Stalwart Legionnaires are planning to cross the mountains and attack the rebels from the rear so she sets out to stop them. When her former Legionnaire lover realises she has reverted to her birth race's attitudes and discovers she has magical power his reaction encapsulates the attitudes of the dominant males of Tyr:

I should have known not to get involved with a Kardi barbarian,' he said and his viciousness went straight to my inner core of uncertainties. 'You're shit, Ligea, and you're the colour of shit. You always did have the vulgarity of an ill-bred barbarian. What highborn woman of Tyr consorts with the Brotherhood? What real Domina makes friends of her slaves? You never did have any class! You geld a man. I only ever took up with you because I thought it would do my career good to be seen with a General's daughter, but by Ocrastes' balls, it's been a hard grind to bed such an ugly, castrating whore (Larke 2006, 438).

This diatribe comes from the man who asked Ligea to marry him instead of going to Kardistan. Naturally, Ligea is shocked and deeply hurt by the Legionnaire's reaction. But the pain is necessary in the on-going development of Ligea's growth as a human being. Larke uses this scene to remove any lingering allegiance Ligea might have had to Tyr and, when Larke's book closes, Ligea has become committed to supporting the Kardi people. She returns to Tyr, where she still owns property and can see what political moves are being planned against Kardiastan. Larke explores many of the uncomfortable truths in Ligea's relationship with the slave, Brand, and her slave-mother.

*Heart of the Mirage* examines the mind-set of someone who has been taken from their culture and raised in the conqueror's culture. Because Ligea was taken as a young child she accepts everything she is told and grows to love the man responsible for their parents' death. Larke then examines the ways in which Ligea's entrenched prejudices, such as discrimination against Kardis and persecution of conquered people, are shifted over a period of time. Ligea eventually discards the values of Tyr and rebuilds herself based on a newly-adopted set of knowledge and values. Because Larke thoroughly immerses the reader in Ligea's world, her protagonist's painful journey of self discovery is more gripping to the reader, and more deeply felt. Larke exploits the close viewpoint of her narration, drawing the reader in to an immersive experience of Ligea's discovery of her 'otherness' and her political awakening. With her, the reader experiences what it would be like to have their certainties about who they are – and the privileges they associate with that sense of who they are – removed from them.

**Reflective Case Study: *The T'En Exiles*.**

This is the first book of a new series, a prequel to the T'En trilogy, published by Random House. In the trilogy I explored the clash of two political systems, particularly in terms of the gender divide between the invaders, who come from an overtly patriarchal society, and the people of Fair Isle, who were ruled by an Empress.

The Fair Isle protagonist, Imoshen, is descended from the T'En sorcerers who had settled Fair Isle 600 years earlier. In the trilogy I mention that Imoshen was named after Imoshen the First. The current Imoshen was surprised and shocked to realise that the arrival of Imoshen the First was not a peaceful settlement but the invasion of a sorcerous race which had been cast out of its own home. The idea that history was a white-washed creation for public consumption intrigued me and in writing *the T'En Exiles* I set out to write the 'true' story of how the T'En settled Fair Isle. This meant I had to go back to their homeland, create their society and discover why they were exiled.

In *The T'En Exiles*, I wanted to explore the themes I'd touched on in the earlier trilogy: discrimination on the basis of gender and magical ability, how this led to persecution and how the closed society of the T'Enatuath (T'En tribe) responded to this persecution.

For the reader to empathise with the characters I needed to create a world that was internally consistent and immersive. I wasn't content with a standard High Fantasy medieval society (feudalism lite) in which entrenched discrimination and persecution were merely plot elements, or where, as in Le Guin's work, a utopian vision of racial harmony removed the possibility of a deeper and more critical/nuanced engagement with the question of how discrimination and persecution are enacted and can be overcome.

Fantasy depends on the premise that magic is possible and fantasy readers are willing to suspend disbelief in the laws of nature so that they can enjoy the thrill of a story that uses magic as a plot device. I have long believed, however, that authors have not fully explored the consequences of magical people living alongside 'normal' people.

Sometimes, in fantasy, the characters without magic are a little wary of its power, but more often than not magic is simply accepted. In Forsyth's *Witches of Eileanan* series the repression of magic was an aberration and, once the evil influence of the King was removed, society went back to a status quo in which magic was accepted. In Tolkien, ordinary people like Hobbits are in awe of Elves and just a little wary of them.

I felt that 'normal' people, the Meers, would resent and fear the gifted T'En. Even more than that, those with gifts would be wary of each other, for good reason. Having studied Iaido, (the art of the Samurai sword), for five years, I knew that if two

Samurai warriors met they would be reluctant to draw swords against each other because one would surely die, possibly both. So I created a society for the T'En based on careful protocols and a rigid hierarchy, where the use of gifts was strictly controlled, where T'En children spent twenty years, from the age of thirteen, learning to harness their gifts.

It beggars belief that it is only in the last one hundred years that women have gained the right to vote. Today, only women in first world countries experience anything approaching equality. As in the T'En trilogy, I wanted to explore the gender divide in this new series. To raise the stakes I decided the T'En gifts would manifest differently depending on gender. I wanted to turn our society on its head. So, in T'En society, the females are more powerful than the males, but few females are born and their greater powers only manifest after they have given birth to children, particularly Sacrare children (babies born of two pure T'En parents). Because of this gender divide the males and female live separate lives in Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods.

I based the interactions within the Fraetraes, (Brotherhoods) on critical insights into gendered community or sub-cultural behaviour in the real world. As Courtenay says in his analysis of why men indulge in high risk behaviours:

Just as men exercise varying degrees of power over women, so they exercise varying degrees of power among themselves. "Masculinities are configurations of social practices produced not only in relation to femininities but also in relation to one another" (Pyke, 1996, p. 531). Dominant masculinities subordinate lower-status, marginalised masculinities - such as those of gay, rural or lower-class men (Courtenay 2000, 1391).

Just as the captain sets the tone for his ship, the leader of the Brotherhood sets the tone for his Fraetrae. The outcome of a society built by a violent leader can be seen in the history of the settlement of Greenland, where Eric the Red (a man prone to violence and murder) established a colony in 980. The settlers' reputation for

violence was so bad that a priest refused to go to Greenland to serve as Bishop unless he was protected:

Bishop Arnald's fears were well founded when he ran afoul of one called Ozur. In a battle during a church service Sokkason defended the Bishop and was later murdered by some of Ozur's relatives. According to the saga of Einar Sokkason a man called Steingrim tried to stop the fighting and was in turn killed (Diamond 2005, 220).

In *The T'En Exiles*, the males flourish in the Brotherhoods by clawing for rank; they win rank through bluff and violence. According to the females, the Brotherhoods bring out the worst in males and the females close their ranks against them. As Imoshen reflects:

In her experience individual Frae-brothers were not cruel. But she had to admit, if a dog joined a vicious pack it had to become vicious to survive (Daniells, 2007, 39).

Working on the assumption that a gene for magic wouldn't simply appear I created the Malaunje: people born with a rare, recessive genetic mutation. Malaunje are born of Meer parents and have an affinity for the Gifts. When the Malaunje intermarry, they have a one in four chance of producing T'En. In this sense, the 'gene' for magical ability is similar to the recessive allele that carries cystic fibrosis in humans<sup>1</sup>.

Just as there is a difference between the half-blood Malaunje and the T'En, there is a difference in the way the gifts manifest in males and females of the T'En. This allows me to explore persecution of repressed people and the gender divide. In our society, women are the victims of intimate partner violence at a rate about 5 times

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in cystic fibrosis (a disease that seriously impairs breathing and digestion), the gene that causes abnormal mucus production and disease is a recessive allele. A person who inherits one copy of the recessive allele does not develop disease because the normal allele predominates. However, such a person is a carrier who has a 50-50 chance of passing the altered recessive allele to each of his or her descendants. When both parents are carriers, the chance is one in four that a child will inherit two of the recessive alleles, one from each parent, and develop disease (National Health Museum, para 2).

that of males (Rennison and Welchans 2000, para 22). In T'En society, the women believe males are too dangerous to live with their female relatives after the age of seventeen. When Imoshen's adopted son comes of age, her Swae-sisters want her to cast him out of the Sisterhood. One warns:

Your continued affection for him undermines your Statura. How can your Swae-sisters trust you when you are blind to the dangers of the males? (Daniells, 2007, 22)

With all these internal tensions - the divide between Malaunje and T'En, and between T'En females and males - the T'Enatuath fail to see trouble brewing with the Meers. While they are distracted by internal rivalry, the Meer King attacks. The Meers justify their aggression by arguing:

They (the gods) were angry with us for living beside Wyrds. The Gods blessed the Wyrds with gifts and in return they denied their existence (Daniells, 2007, 297).

The resentment of the ungifted is clear. In the real world you could be born in Sierra Leone where the Infant Mortality Rate is one in four (Balbierz 2007, graph), or you can be born into a life of luxury like the Hilton sisters. Naturally, this creates resentment. In the world of *The T'En Exiles* you could be born with the advantage of innate gifts. Those without gifts resent and fear those who have them.

What with Brotherhoods, Sisterhoods and Malaunje servants who must give up any T'En throwback babies, the T'Enatuath have a complex society. To ease the reader into this I started from the viewpoint of two children, Ronnyn who is T'En, and Octavelle, his Malaunje sister. Living in isolation, Ronnyn and Octavelle's family know nothing about the exile of the T'Enatuath. When Meers attack their family, killing their father, kidnapping the mother and children, and they are locked in a cage

and pelted with mud, Ronnyn and Octavelle struggle to make sense of what is happening to them:

Octavelle wiped mud from her cheek, hand shaking with anger. 'Scholar Hueryx was right. Without the T'En gifts or the Malaunje affinity Meers cannot sense our feelings. But they can still think and reason.' Her top lip curled with contempt. 'They are worse than animals. At least animals only kill for food. They took pleasure in making us suffer' (Daniells, 2007, 303).

There is an unconscious arrogance in Octavelle's voice, arising from what she has been taught. As Al-Issa and Tousignant say, 'Racism involves the assumption of inherent superiority of one group and the consequent discrimination against others' (Al-Issa and Tousignant 1997, 18). While the T'Enatuath are persecuted by the Meers and see their persecutors as lesser beings, this very persecution increases the T'Enatuath's sense of belonging:

since an out group threat tends to increase in-group identification (Dion, 1979), experiencing discrimination should also increase identification of the victims with their own groups (Al-Issa and Tousignant 1997, 26).

As the T'Enatuath leader, Imoshen guides her people to Port-Mirror-on-Sea where they board their ships. While the T'En resent the persecution of the Meers, they are blind to the discrimination inherent in their stratified society. Imoshen corrects her second-in-command, who calls their ship a boat.

Imoshen smiled. 'Don't let the Ships-master hear you call his vessel a boat. He'll be insulted.'

Egrayne did not smile, reminding Imoshen that the Ships-master was Malaunje and it wasn't his place to be insulted. She'd grown up surrounded by Malaunje. She knew they often took umbrage, although they did not reveal this. (Daniells, 2007, 320)

The T'En can't see that they are oppressing their own Malaunje relatives. Having grown up within their society they see its structure as the correct and only way to live.

Unlike Le Guin, who deliberately populated her novels with differently coloured people but did not explore the consequences of racial discrimination, I created different racial characteristics, Malaunje and T'En, which affected where a character lived within their society and the scope of their life choices so that I could explore discrimination. How this affects the individual is made clear for example, when Octavelle's baby brother is born.

This baby was bald and so pale that, when her mother wiped off some of the birthing blood, Octavelle could see the fine veins mottling his skin like marble.

He was T'En, and Octavelle felt an unworthy stab of jealousy. By a twist of fate this baby would belong to the elite, while she and Itania would be servants (Daniells, 2007, 343).

In *Heart of the Mirage* Larke's protagonist is torn because she has been raised by a General of Tyr, yet she discovers she was born a Kardi. In *The T'En Exiles*, Imoshen was raised by Frae-brothers who broke the Covenant. Because of her scandalous upbringing the women of her Sisterhood feel sorry for Imoshen, but this upbringing gives Imoshen a rare insight into male T'En culture:

Her Swae-sisters ... feared the males and instinctively closed ranks against them. The Swae saw danger in the Frae, while she, who had been raised by males in defiance of the Covenant, saw them for what they were, flawed, it was true, but no more monsters than the T'En females. (Daniells, 2007, 121)

I specifically built the T'Enatuath society to explore the division between gifted and non-gifted peoples, and the division between male and female. Through complex world building and characterisation, I aim for reader immersion so that they will identify with Imoshen, who sets out with the best of intentions yet is as blind to

her own acts of discrimination and persecution as she is to the privileges she enjoys (and accepts as her due) at the expense of others' liberty.

## Conclusion

More than thirty years ago Le Guin set out to confront the whiteness of High Fantasy; while her characters were of different skin colours, they lived in a racially-utopic society and didn't experience discrimination or persecution. More recently, Larke set out to explore the consequences of taking a child from their culture, raising them in another culture and then returning them to the original in a more dystopic world, where racial discrimination and persecution mirrored some aspects of the real world. Her female protagonist suffered discrimination because of her race and her gender.

In *The T'En Exiles*, through characters of different races, genders and abilities I set out to explore the consequences of living in a culture with a complex set of moral and cultural expectations about the abilities and rights of various kinds of people.

Since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings*, the genre of High Fantasy has become a hugely popular genre, generating many novels that follow in Tolkien's tradition. Tolkien's novel established a template for High Fantasy novels in which

discrimination and persecution on the basis of gender, race and ability were naturalised, at least partly through the nostalgic and utopic tradition of ‘feudalism lite’ world building. In many works of High Fantasy issues of discrimination and persecution are used as sources of conflict – either political, social, personal or moral – but are often quickly and/or artificially resolved through magical revelation or battle.

More recent works have explored the moral and personal effects of discrimination and persecution through exploring in more depth the lived realities of characters of various genders, races and abilities. Works such as those of Glenda Larke demonstrate that High Fantasy can be an effective and emotionally-engaging vehicle for the deep exploration of the complex issues of discrimination and persecution, particularly in terms of exploring ways in which long-standing traditions of discrimination can be overcome both in individual consciousness, and in the cultures they represent.

*The T’En Exiles* draws on this tradition, seeking to both ‘write back’ to the masculinist, imperialist, whitewashed history of High Fantasy, against the tradition of depicting discriminatory cultures as utopic or unproblematic. In writing it, I seek to continue to expand and explore the ways in which High Fantasy can be a vehicle for social comment and, perhaps, even a stimulus to change.

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