

The Portrayal of Gifted Children in *The Giver Quartet*: Gifts to Accomplish the Mission

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Abstract

In this article, I shall discuss gifts described in *The Giver Quartet* through considering the gifted children portrayed in the tetralogy, *The Giver* (1993), *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012) which were written by Lois Lowry (1937-), an American author who has been awarded the Newberry Medal twice for *Number the Stars* (1989) and *The Giver*.

The whole discussion is divided into four parts, based on the following aspects: construction, colour, giving and receiving, and the significance of gifts. The boy protagonist, called Gabriel ('Gabe' in short), is the focus of the discussion because he takes such a significant role in this Quartet.

Although the gifts of the gifted children in *The Giver Quartet* show some similarities to magic or superhuman power of protagonists in other fantasy works, they are connected with the accomplishment of the mission. Gabe is confronted with evil at the end of the final book. He conquers evil without killing or beating but with his own gift, 'veering': the power to enter into others and experience his or her inner self. The victory gained without any violent behaviour seems to suggest one of the 'other ways' that fantasy writers need to consider, as Ursula K. Le Guin suggests in *Cheek by Jowl* (2009).

The Giver Quartet, which describes Gabe's birth and growth, might be similar to heroic literary works. However, it is the decision of Jonas that enables Gabe to survive and accomplish the mission. It is Jonas, the gifted boy protagonist of *The Giver*, who due to his own gift realises the existence of the freedom of choice through the recognition of differences and makes up his mind to leave the totalitarian Community with Gabe to search for Elsewhere.

『ギヴァー』4部作における〈選ばれた子ども〉の表象 —— 使命を果たすための〈天賦の能力〉 ——

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要旨

アメリカ人作家 Lois Lowry (1937-) の『ギヴァー —— 記憶を注ぐもの —— 』(*The Giver*, 1993) は、Lowry にとって、『ふたりの星』(*Number the Stars*, 1989) に次ぐ2冊目のニューベリー賞受賞作である。本論では、『ギヴァー』とその続編3冊(*Gathering Blue*, 2000; *Messenger*, 2004; *Son*, 2012)を含めた『ギヴァー』4部作(*The Giver Quartet*)について、各巻に描かれる〈選ばれた子ども〉の表象を中心に論じる。

論考は、本作品の構成、色の重要性、記憶を注ぐことと受けとること、〈選ばれた子ども〉が生まれながらに有する〈天賦の能力〉の意味という4項に分かれ、最終巻に登場する〈選ばれた子ども〉であり、4部作全体に関わる重要な役割を

果たす少年 Gabriel (略称 Gabe) に焦点を当てる。

『ギヴァー』4 部作の子ども主人公の生来の〈天賦^{天賦}の能力^{能力}〉には、他のファンタジー作家による先行作品に描かれる魔法や超人的な能力との類似点もあるものの、独自性も見られる。それは、ある使命を果たすための能力だということである。特に、最終巻の Gabe が担うのは、悪との対峙であり、殺害等の暴力的な行為を伴わぬ勝利を得ることである。〈選ばれた子ども〉Gabe の〈天賦^{天賦}の能力^{能力}〉は、相手の中に「入り込む力」(veering)である。Gabe は、相手の中に入り込み、その本質を知ることによって相手を制することができる。この戦い方には、Ursula Le Guin(1929-) が提唱するファンタジーの新しい道の模索、すなわち、善が悪を下すための方法は殺害だけではないとする考えに通ずるものがある。

4 冊の本を通して Gabe の誕生と成長が描かれていることから、本作品には英雄物語との類似性も見られる。しかしながら、最後に使命を成し遂げる Gabe の存続を可能にしたのは、乳児だった Gabe を救った Jonas の決断である。最初の巻『ギヴァー』において、全体主義的な近未来の共同体で、自らの〈天賦^{天賦}の能力^{能力}〉により差異の存在を認識し、選択の自由が存在することを悟り、共同体以外の場所を希求した少年主人公 Jonas の存在なしには、この結末はもたらされなかったといえよう。

Introduction

The Giver (1993) is the second book to be awarded the Newbery Medal to Lois Lowry (1937-), an American author who was also awarded the Medal for a previous work, *Number the Stars* (1989). The story of *The Giver* is located in a fictional world where everything is rigidly controlled by the top of the Community. *The Giver Quartet* consists of *The Giver* and its three sequels, that is, *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012). In each book, the story is narrated from the viewpoint of a gifted child, who is the protagonist of the volume. Jonas is focalized in the first volume; the second book tells the story of Kira; the third one focuses on Matty; the central figure is Gabriel in the final book.

In this article, I shall discuss the ‘gifts’ given to the gifted children described in *The Giver Quartet* in terms of four aspects: construction, colour, giving and receiving, and the significance of gifts in this work. The whole discussion focuses on a boy called Gabriel, whose name is shortened to Gabe throughout the four books, because of the significant function of this boy protagonist in this Quartet. Although there are a number of reviews that concentrate on the final book, *Son*, most of the academic works just deal with the first book.¹ This article is an attempt to look at the Quartet as one whole body of work in order to clarify what gifted children designate in this fantasy work.

1. The Construction of the Four Volumes

Each volume of *The Giver Quartet* contains aspects that will connect with each other to complete a lengthy story. Aspects alluded to and quoted from the previous volumes function to connect the four books. Just as the technique of allusion requires the reader to have some previous knowledge, these aspects depend upon the reader's familiarity with each volume.²

The sequence of the first volume is not mentioned in the second volume. *Gathering Blue* is another story that takes place in another world, which is different from the Community in *The Giver*, though the girl protagonist Kira and Mat (later Matty)³, who are deeply concerned with the third and fourth volumes, first appear in this book.

In fact, the location of the third volume is the place where Jonas and Gabe, who escaped from the Community in the first volume, reach. However, neither of their names is mentioned from the beginning to the end. Therefore, the reader is required to comprehend some descriptions alluded to in order to realise that the man called Leader is actually Jonas. For example, Matty and Leader talk about 'the little sleigh' displayed in the Museum of the Village.⁴ Their conversation implicitly informs us that Leader is none other than Jonas, who has come to the Village with a baby boy on the sleigh in the snow. Leader also mentions that he has been continuously frightened for a couple of years because 'no one had ever fled my community successfully before',⁵ and thus, recognisably, the community stands for the Community in *The Giver*. Moreover, there is such an explanation about Leader's innate power as follows:

"Leader knows better than anyone about things," Matty remarked.

"And he's still younger than many."

"He sees beyond."

"What?"

"He has a special gift. Some people do. Leader sees beyond."⁶

The gift of Leader might function to remind the reader of the quality the boy protagonist Jonas in *The Giver* has by nature: 'the Capacity to See Beyond'.⁷

In the final volume, from the beginning, the story recognises that Birthmother is one of the roles assigned to 12-year-old children in the Community. The fourth book consists of three parts and the first two tell the story of the girl protagonist named Claire, a Birthmother in the Community. In the middle of the first part, the reader is informed that

Claire's 'Product', which is a term for a baby in the Community, is named 'Gabe'. In the third part, Claire is in the Village where the teenaged Gabe lives with Jonas and his wife, Kira. Thus, all the protagonists of the quartet meet together in the final volume.

Adding to the alluded aspects explained above, binary oppositions function to highlight the contrast of total difference between opposites throughout the four books.⁸ For instance, the Community described in the first volume, where Jonas is brought up, stands for a totalitarian dystopia,⁹ whereas the Village, the setting of the third volume, portrays utopia. The Community is a society in which the people experience neither pain nor pleasure, war but only peace, or suffering as a result of total control by the government and according to strict rules. The Village is the place that accepts everyone who escaped from some other places where s/he has undergone severe experiences. Since most of the people in the Village have escaped from a tragic past, the Community and the Village seem to connote the past and the future as well.

Likewise, the significant confrontation between good and evil at the end of the quartet is effectively described through the completely opposite characters with innate powers, Trademaster and Gabe. This confrontation will be discussed in the final section of this article.

The interwoven aspects in *The Giver Quartet* function to emphasise the significance of Gabe's role. As it is discussed later, this boy protagonist is doomed to confront Evil at the end of the whole story. Thus, arguably, the carefully constructed four books can be regarded as a successful tetralogy,¹⁰ that is, four indispensable parts to tell one story.

2. Colour

Colour, which is concerned with emotion, apparently has a significant role in *The Giver Quartet*.¹¹ In the Community described in *The Giver*, nobody has knowledge of colour. However, Jonas, who has 'the Capacity to See Beyond',¹² is different from others. One day, he notices something odd:

... suddenly Jonas had noticed, following the path of the apple through the air with his eyes, that the piece of fruit had — well, this was the part that he couldn't adequately understand — the apple had *changed*. Just for an instant. It had changed in mid-air, he remembered. Then it was in his hand, and he looked at it carefully, but it was the same apple. Unchanged. The same size and shape: a perfect sphere. The same nondescript shade, about the same shade as his own tunic.¹³

Later, Jonas realises this incident as his recognition of the colour ‘red’ when he learns that there is something called colour during his training. Jonas is also informed that there are many different colours the people of the Community discarded when they chose Sameness.¹⁴ From then, Jonas gradually realises that the existence of different colours suggests the freedom of choice for the individual, which is contradictory to the sense of safeness the people of the Community are guaranteed by not choosing or deciding anything by themselves.¹⁵ Jonas’s first realisation and desire to continue to see colour later leads him to realise another thing that the Community throws away for Sameness is emotion, including love.¹⁶

For the girl protagonist Kira in *Gathering Blue*, blue is a significant colour. After she becomes an orphan, her power to draw pictures predicting the future with embroidery saves her life. Kira, who needs to draw an embroidered picture for her guardian, needs to learn the technique of dyeing, just like her dead mother. However, even after she learns how to dye, she cannot succeed in creating the colour blue. Mat, who is Kira’s best friend, visits the Village where everyone knows how to create blue. From the Village, Mat brings Kira both the colour blue and her father Christopher, who had been supposed dead. In the second volume, the colour blue designates affectionate relationships. Mat mentions a young man with pale blue eyes in the Village and that Kira can marry him if she cannot find anybody to take her place.¹⁷ Actually, it is revealed in the third volume that it is Jonas (Leader in this book) who is the young man with blue eyes in Mat’s story told to Kira in the previous book.¹⁸ As Mat predicts, Jonas becomes Kira’s husband in the final volume.

In *Messenger*, no colour is specifically mentioned in relation to the boy protagonist, Matty. However, as he himself knows, he is liked by Forest, which surrounds the Village and always sends Warnings to the inhabitants of the Village. Although nobody can enter Forest after receiving Warnings, Matty has never received such Warnings.¹⁹ When Forest shows signs of having changed into a hostile creature, Matty visits Kira to take her to her father in the Village. In the scene where Kira draws a picture with embroidery to find out the future journey she will start with Matty before their departure, most of the picture is filled with the colour green:

The stitches were tiny and complicated, and each section a subtle variation in color, so that deep green moved gradually into a slightly lighter shade, and then again lighter, until at the edges it was a pale yellow. The colors combined to form an exquisite pattern of trees, with the tiniest of individual leaves outlined in countless numbers.

“It’s Forest,” Matty said, recognizing it.²⁰

Thus, it is recognised that the colour of Forest is a significant aspect in the third volume.

3. Giving and Receiving

In the Community in *The Giver*, when a child becomes 12 years old, s/he is expected to be assigned a role such as Fish Hatchery, Birthmother, Childcare, or Director of Recreation at the Ceremony of Twelve. Then, Jonas is singled out as the Receiver because of his qualities: intelligence, integrity, bravery, wisdom, and the Capacity to See Beyond.²¹ Actually, this fifth quality particular to him is nothing more than his gift as has been mentioned in the previous section. There is only one Receiver in the Community, and Jonas is assigned to be the present Receiver's successor. The Giver explains his rare quality of the Capacity to See Beyond. The former Receiver's role is changed because of the selection of his successor into giving Jonas what he has received until then. The Giver tells Jonas during his training:

"I'm right, then," The Giver said. "You're beginning to see the color red."

"The what?"

The Giver sighed. "How to explain this? Once, back in the time of the memories, everything had a shape and size, the way things still do, but they also had a quality called color.

"There were a lot of colors . . ."

"Do you see it all the time?"

"I see all of them. All the colors."

"Will I?"

"Of course. When you receive the memories. You have the capacity to see beyond. You'll gain wisdom then, along with colors. And lots more."²²

Then, Jonas realises his role as the Receiver is receiving the memories the people of the Community discarded in the distant past. Each time the Giver conveys a memory towards the next Receiver, Jonas, the memory disappears from the Giver's mind. Although there are not only pleasant memories but also painful ones, Jonas cannot tell anybody else about his training. Even when he receives an unbearably painful and torturing memory, Jonas has to be patient alone.

However, Jonas unconsciously becomes the Giver for a baby, Gabe. In fact, just before he is selected as the Receiver, a newchild (the name for a baby in the Community)

starts spending nights at Jonas's household because the newchild cannot sleep at night and annoys the working people in the Nurturing Center. Irregularly, Jonas's father obtains permission to take care of the newchild at home for a while. That newchild is Gabe. While he is lulling Gabe to sleep one night, Jonas recalls his memory of training:

He was not aware of giving the memory; but suddenly he realized that it was becoming dimmer, that it was sliding through his hand into the being of the newchild. Gabriel became quiet. Startled, Jonas pulled back what was left of the memory with a burst of will. He removed his hand from the little back and stood quietly beside the crib.²³

Nevertheless, because the newchild, who sleeps soundly for the first time, begins to spend nights in Jonas's bedroom since then, Jonas continues giving Gabriel a tiny part of the pleasant memories he has received. He whispers to Gabe, 'Things could change,' and tells him about another possible world with colour as well as love.²⁴ Therefore, two Receivers and two Givers secretly exist at the same time in the Community, which is unparalleled in history there.

Actually, Gabe, who cannot sleep without Jonas and disturbs all the others in the Nurturing Center all through the night, is doomed to be released according to the rules of the Community. Since Jonas has already received the memory of the ceremony called release and known the truth, that is, releasing babies means killing them based on the idea of eugenics, he makes up his mind to go Elsewhere with Gabe to save this baby's life.

4. Gifts to Accomplish the Mission

As heroic literary works are unavoidably intertextual,²⁵ gifted children who have their own specific innate talents are reminiscent of the wizards in Ursula K. Le Guin's fantasy works, such as the wizards of Earthsea or the boy of Uplands, with fearsome gifts.²⁶ Gifts as well as magic can be regarded as hereditary power in Le Guin's works. Therefore, gifts described in Le Guin are arguably similar to those in Lowry.²⁷ However, there seems to be a particular quality of gifts that the children in *The Giver Quartet* obtain. Their gifts seem to be accompanied by a mission, and thus, are gradually lost after the mission is accomplished.²⁸

Gifted children in *The Giver Quartet* show a similarity to child gods. The child god is usually an orphan or an isolated child. Some are strongly connected with their mothers

or mother-like figures. They are often doomed to die in their youth.²⁹ Since every child is regarded as a ‘Product’ and is taken care of by Father and Mother assigned at the Ceremony in the Community, Jonas’s situation is almost the same as an orphan’s. Kira, whose father later appears, is not an orphan, but her gift is affected by her mother who was able to create any sort of colour. In addition, Kira was isolated before she proves her gift to draw the embroidered picture of the future.

Matty, who was also an isolated child in his family, realises his own gift after moving to the Village where all the inhabitants help each other. He is living with Kira’s father, called Seer, who ‘can see more than most’ in spite of his blindness.³⁰ One day, Matty realises that his gift is healing other livings, both human and non-human beings, after he saves an injured frog.³¹ After healing others, Matty feels exhausted and needs sufficient rest to recover. Once the man with evil power called Trademaster appears, his utopian Village begins to change because the inhabitants tend to lose their virtue by exchanging it for something they demand. Forest, which has always loved and welcomed Matty, is also getting sick. Both begin to reject people coming to the Village from elsewhere. Thus, Matty tries to take Kira to the Village where her father is living. However, on their journey, they are attacked by the trees and shut up in Forest. Matty uses his gift not only to save Kira but also to heal Forest, as well as the whole Village:

Matty called for his gift to come. There was no sense of how to direct it. He simply clawed at the earth, feeling the power in his hands enter, pulsating, into the ruined world. He became aware, suddenly, that he had been chosen for this . . . He saw Forest and understood what Seer had meant. It was an illusion. It was a tangled knot of fears and deceits and dark struggles for power that had disguised itself and almost destroyed everything. Now it was unfolding, like a flower coming into bloom, radiant with possibility.³²

Instead of healing everything, Matty sacrifices himself. Because of his gift and his deed, Matty is given the name, not Messenger, which he wanted to gain, but Healer.³³ Matty’s self-sacrifice and early death is reminiscent of child gods.

Just like Matty, conquering Evil might be the mission for Gabe. Unusually as Birthmother in the Community, Gabe’s mother Claire remembers her son and by accident acquires an opportunity to meet him. After Jonas escapes with Gabe from the Community, she starts to pursue her own child. Claire finally finds Gabe by sacrificing her youth, which is required by Trademaster as something to trade in return for taking Claire to her son.³⁴

Gabe, who knows the truth, decides to fight with Trademaster to save his dying mother. The bravery that every gifted child in *The Giver Quartet* shows after making up his/her mind reminds us of another child protagonist, Annemarie in Lowry's *Number the Stars*:

“Brave?” Annemarie asked, surprised. “No, I wasn’t. I was very frightened.”
“You risked your life.”
“But I didn’t even think about that! I was only thinking of —— ”
He interrupted her, smiling. “That’s all that brave means ——
not thinking about the dangers. Just thinking about what you must
do”³⁵

Like Lowry’s other brave child protagonists, Gabe faces Trademaster, who is likely to be much more powerful than he is, without any hesitation to accomplish what he must do. Gabe eventually succeeds in defeating Trademaster through a fight without killing or beating. He used his own gift, veering:

Gabe entered Trademaster. He found himself whirling through eons of time, destroying at random, screaming with rage and pain. He became Trademaster. He was sick with searing hatred, and in the endless vortex through which he whirled, there was no comfort. He *understood* Trademaster, and the deep malevolence that inhabited him. It was true, what he had earlier sensed, that Trademaster was inhuman. He was not a man but simply disguised as one. He was the force of evil, of all evil for all time.³⁶

Since he realises the most effective attack against evil is by starving it, Gabe tells evil the truth, that is, nobody has ever been destroyed by what evil has done. Trademaster, who loses its power and figure, disappears at last. After the disappearance of evil, Gabe comes back to the Village to see his mother, who regains her youth.

Gabe’s fight with Trademaster seems to suggest one of the ‘other ways’ to describe the genuine difference between good and evil in Le Guin’s works. Le Guin suggests that killing is not the only way for good to defeat evil.³⁷ As it is clarified through the description of Gabe’s confrontation with Trademaster, the greatest difference between evil power and the innate power of gifted children designated in *The Giver Quartet* is the intention of use: to destroy others or to save them.

Conclusion

As a consequence of the whole discussion, it can be argued that the difference between mere superhuman powers and gifts described through child protagonists in *The Giver Quartet* is explored. In this tetralogy, child protagonists' gifts are innate talents that are necessary to accomplish certain missions. After the accomplishment, their gifts are gradually lost. Gifts designate not mere power but love for others in this fantasy work.

Furthermore, *The Giver Quartet* shows a similarity to heroic literary works describing the birth and growth of the hero, Gabe, whose story is told throughout the four books from his babyhood to his teens. In other words, it might be possible to read this tetralogy as the story of a gifted boy, whose life has once been saved by another gifted boy, grows up enough to realise his own gift to conquer evil and to save others. The accomplishment of the mission by Gabe in the final volume is actually brought about by the first decision made by Jonas, the boy protagonist of *The Giver*, who realises the existence of the freedom of choice through the recognition of difference because of his own gift.³⁸

Notes

- 1 Both critical and approving reviews were written when *Son* was published. For instance, in his article titled 'Sequelitis' in *The Horn Book Magazine* (2012), Roger Sutton critically introduces *The Giver* as an example of the books none of which 'needed to keep going.' In addition, Dory Fox points out some worn-out plots or old-fashioned descriptions in *Son* and finds the ending 'disappointing' because '*The Giver* stands as a nearly perfect and singular work.' (*New Republic*, 2012) Moreover, according to the book review in *The Boston Globe* (2012), '*Son* is an imperfect book, hampered by its over-elaborations and pacing' in spite of the high assessment of Lowry as a talented writer (The reviewer admits that the final book could not perfectly conclude this series unless the writer was Lowry).

However, Susan Carpenter regards *Son* as 'a gripping end' to *The Giver* series, though Lowry's writing is not always very successful, and Clare appears to be a stereotyped heroine affecting Feminism. (*The Los Angeles Times* 2012) Mary Quattlebaum is more supportive of *Son* and praises Lowry as a 'consummate stylist':

Lowry handles it all magnificently: the leap in time, the shifts in perspective, the moments of extreme emotion — fear, joy, sadness — all conveyed in unadorned prose that seizes the heart. (*The Washington Post* 2012)

Likewise, in the article titled 'The Searcher' in *The New York Times* (2012), Robin Wasserman approves *Son* as a successful work uniting all three preceding works in the quartet and a 'powerful theme that runs throughout the quartet,' adding that 'empathy here claims center stage.'

Many of the reviews indicate that the incident of her own son's death in an accident during his army training affects Lowry's writing of *Son* as a story of a mother and a son. The author herself, who has received various letters and e-mails from her enthusiastic readers, including

those suffering mental problems, since the publication of *The Giver*, says in an interview with *The Huffington Post* (2012) that she usually creates a world for the characters she has already created and that she wrote *Son* more for her characters, who remain with her even after finishing one book, than her fans:

I think about them [characters], and time passes, so finally I sat down to write this last book, there they all were. And I found, to my surprise, a new character appeared and took over the book.

- 2 In *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), Chris Baldick explains ‘allusion’ as ‘an indirect or passing reference to some event, person, place, or artistic work, the nature and relevance of which is not explained by the writer but relies on the reader’s familiarity with what is thus mentioned’. The ‘reference’ is originally supposed to be historical or literary context. (p.7)
- 3 According to the account in *Gathering Blue*, in the society where Kira and Matty are born, people are given names with one syllable at birth and as they grow older, the syllables of the name increase. For instance, the girl protagonist’s name is turned into Kira from Kir given to her at her birth.
- 4 Lois Lowry, *Messenger*, p. 28.
- 5 *Ibid*, p.29. Emphasis was added.
- 6 *Ibid*, pp.87-88. Emphasis was added.
- 7 Lowry, *The Giver*, p.60.
- 8 About the effectiveness of binary oppositions, Terry Eagleton explains ‘how one term of an antithesis secretly inheres within the other’ in *Literary Theory* (Blackwell, 2008, p.115)
- 9 In *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), the co-editors Edward James and Farah Medlesohn list up *The Giver* as one of the modern fantasy works that represents dystopia based on ‘Cold War-style totalitarianism’. (p.226)
- 10 Baldick explains ‘tetralogy’ as ‘a group of four connected plays or novels’ and lists up satyr plays presented in Ancient Greek dramatic festivals and Shakespeare’s major historical plays as examples of tetralogy. (2001 p.257)
- 11 Lowry places such a great emphasis on colour because of her own experience of having worked with a painter who was so passionate with colour. In her ‘Newberry Acceptance Speech’ for *The Giver*, Lowry admires his ‘capacity for seeing color’, which is ‘far beyond’ hers. This admiration seems to be reflected in Jonas’s gift.
- 12 Lois Lowry, *The Giver*, p.60. The Receiver, who is the most important person of the Community, describes Jonas’s unusual quality with this phrase.
- 13 Lowry, *The Giver* p.24.
- 14 *Ibid*, p.94.
- 15 *Ibid*, pp. 97-9.
- 16 When he asks his Father and Mother, both of which are merely roles assigned by the Community, ‘Do you love me?’ after discovering the word ‘love’, Jonas knows that there is no such word as ‘love’ in the Community because it was regarded as being ‘meaningless’ many years ago. (*Ibid*, pp. 126-7)
- 17 Lowry, *Gathering Blue*, p.267.
- 18 Lowry, *Messenger*, p.88. Like Jonas, Gabe and his mother Claire have ‘pale eyes’.
- 19 *Ibid*, p.9, pp. 14-15.
- 20 *Ibid*, pp.123-4.
- 21 Lowry, *The Giver*, pp.62-3.
- 22 *Ibid*, pp.94-5.

- 23 *Ibid*, p.116.
24 *Ibid*, pp. 128-9.
25 John Stephens points out in *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture* (1998), ‘Heroic literature involves an intertextuality which as its focused content is quite different from what we have been looking at previously, though the intertextual functions have much in common.’ (p.91)
26 They respectively appear in Le Guin’s *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) and *Gifts* (2004).
27 Among Lowry’s contemporaries, Le Guin’s fantasy works mentioned above are rare examples in which protagonists need to overcome conflicts caused by their own gifts, that is, innate powers. Usually, young powerful protagonists in fantasy works for children tend to suffer not from their mighty powers but from their fates, just like Harry Potter. After entering the school for wizards on Roke Island, Ged is taught by the Master Changer that using magic inevitably affects the balance of the world. (chap. 3, *A Wizard of Earthsea*). Likewise, Orrec, for the first time realises the possibility of his own gifts, which can heal as well as destroy others when he is asked by his best friend Gry, ‘Why do you think we have the gifts?’ (*Gifts* 2004 pp.227-31) It seems appropriate to compare the gifted children in Le Guin with those in Lowry. Like Le Guin’s gifted children, who stand for the question about the innate powers themselves, Lowry’s gifted children convey the same message all through the tetralogy: ‘the vital need of people to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment,’ as Lowry herself mentions in the ‘Biography’ section on her official site.
28 In the fourth book, *Son*, Kira tells Gabe that her power is leaving her as is Jonas’s because such powers are no longer necessary for them:

“... Jonas and I don’t need these gifts anymore. We’ve used them to create our life here. We’ve helped others. And our time of such powers is passing now...” (pp.341-2)

- 29 Carl Gustav Jung and Karl Kerényi, *The Science of Mythology*, pp.28-35.
30 Lowry, *Messenger*, p.53.
31 *Ibid*, pp.40-45.
32 *Ibid*, pp.166-8.
33 *Ibid*, p. 169.
34 Lowry, *Son*, pp.264-6.
35 Lois Lowry, *Number the Stars*, pp.122-3.
36 Lowry, *Son*, p.387.
37 Ursula K. Le Guin points out one of the greatest advantages of fantasy literature in *Cheek by Jowl* (2009):

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 to have been 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 beside battle, many choices besides war, and most ways of doing right do not, in fact, involve killing anybody. Fantasy is good at thinking about those other ways. (p.7 Emphasis is added)

Le Guin also highly assesses fantasy as the best way to tell the truth to young children in another of her books, *The Language of the Night*:

It seems to me that the way you can speak absolutely honestly and factually to children about good and evil is to talk about the self — the inner, the deepest self. That is

something children can and do cope with . . . Fantasy is the language of the inner self. I will claim no more for fantasy than to say that I personally find it the appropriate language in which to tell stories to children - and others. (p.59)

- 38 As is explained in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (2001), Lowry is an author who 'encourages readers to read her works through their own experiences, interpreting the story in a way that helps them grow as individuals.' (p.500) Lowry emphasises the importance of freedom of choice in the light of the child's encounter with a book in her award-winning speech:

The man that I named The Giver passed along to the boy knowledge, history, memories, color, pain, laughter, love, and truth. Every time you place a book in the hands of a child, you do the same thing. It is very risky. But each time a child opens a book, he pushes open the gate that separates him from Elsewhere. It gives him choices. It gives him freedom. Those are magnificent, wonderfully unsafe things.

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