“Dragonfly” by Ursula Le Guin: teaching notes

I. Iria

p. 184: “through all the dark years after Maharion fell they held their land and people with firm hands, putting their gains back into the land, upholding some sort of justice, and fighting off petty tyrants.”

--like the fall of the Roman Empire—K. Maharion (like last Roman emperor… vs. K. Lebannen

“wise men of Roke Island” –brought peace and stability in time without a central King of Earthsea (184)

Irians on Way… Iria—a family-owned land on Way Island—feuding divisive family

Old house in ruins…pasture gone wild (185)

4 “Masters of Iria” (one legit—“Master of Old Iria”—definesive / drunk on “wine from his last vineyard” w/ dog troop guarding his borders...married a foreigner from another island—died in childbirth…never in Iria…has a 3 year-old daughter. (185)

Her experiences as a child (185—bottom)

Age 13—issue of Naming Day for the girl: “Dragonfly” use-name, but her father won’t let the village witch or sorcerer name her—doesn’t trust the one (“hex-hag”) and the other he says was traitorous—served his rivals

“bitch” “traitor”—words she repeats from her father and hurls at the dogs (186)

Rose the village witch—cleaning a maggot-infected wound on a sheep’s rump…  
Rose’s eye--\*which\* one wanders? One eye looks a different direction…(187)  
Explains it’s a just a power--that a magic-user to give people their names (not much of an explanation (187)) But that she CAN’T NAME HERSELF

--Asserts that she wants her true name despite her father—sneaking behind his back to get it. (188-189)  
How you you know what name question—CAN’T BE ANSWERED, **but Rose explains how Naming goes, in the water (189) “You open your min up, like. Like opening the doors of a house to the wind. So it comes. Your tongue speaks it, the name. Your breath makes it. You give it to that child, the breath, the name, You can’t think of it. You let it comme to you. It must come through you and the water to her it belongs to. That’s the power, the way it works. It’s all like that. It’s not a thing you do. You have to know how to let it do. That’s all the mastery.” (189)**

**Naming Ceremony (189-190) “Irian” …and Dragonfly’s disappointment and REJECTION of it and Rose, b/c “it’s HIS name”**

**Rose \*DOES\* feel like she’s “left something unfinished” (190)  
HER true name = Etaudis  
they part with a “fierce, long embrace”**

II. Ivory

Birch = Master of Iria, Westpool…. Hires Ivory, a wizard from Roke (as was fashionable)—Ivory comes cheap b/s he’s kind of on internship—learning how to be a wizard in the Real World (191)

Ivory—not useful, just a SHOWY ILLUSIONIST (191-192)—If people want to improve harvests or cure blights or sicknesses—they need to go to the village sorcerer or Rose the witch…And Ivory never notices this stuff… isolates himself “as a man of craft and learning should.” (192)

Ivory asks about old Iria…which he’s walked past

**Birch’s 14-year old daughter Rose** is dying…. Admires Dragonfly (192-193) “She’s tall and as beautiful as a flowering tree” (193)—catches bored Ivory’s interest!

**Ivory’s first sight of Dragonfly (bottom of 193)---dogs biting him and his upset mare  
Dragonfly’s angry that he let his horse be in such danger among the dogs! (194)  
--seems to care more about animals than people**

**“crude giantess” (how she seems to Ivory) (194)**

\*\*Irian tells Rose what Ivory has told her of Roke (KEEN CURIOSITY OF THE 2 women)

What Rose sees in Irian “something beyond what she was” …**”seemed to enter that place of time or being beyond herself”**

**How Ivory’s important to her—different kind of learning from what Irian gets from Rose (198)**

**HOW WE CAN DATE THIS STORY—re Archmage never returning (199)**

**Irian says she wishes she “wasn’t a woman”—“So I could go to Roke!” (200)**

**Ivory comments on the CELIBACY ISSUE (200)**

**--and his Mischievous SCHEME (201)—“You could go to Roke” (201)**

**--She wants to go “and find out whom I am” (201)**

**WHY he goes along with it! (202)**

**HOW Ivory feels about her (his dreams vs. daytime) (202-203): “He was determined now not to win her, but to defeat her” (but his love charm doesn’t work…(204)**

**She plays the part of a man pretty convincingly…on way to Roke**

**Issue of her Name— “Irian”—too easy—(Ivory’s admission “I only wanted to make love to you” (211)**

**HIS TRICK/ TRIUMPH—doesn’t WANT to be celibate… (why he wanted to sneak her in…)  
vs. what SHE wants… (212)**

**III Azver**

Doorkeeper issues (213-216)

They don’t know WHAT she is…Doorkeeper: “I think Irian of Way may have come to us seeking not only what she needs to know, but also what we need to know.” (216)

Irian meets with the 9 Masters of Roke

Master Namer: Kuremkarmerruk only one who will look directly at her—Says she’s not misnamed, “but…”

Summoner opposes her admission

**Pale man (Azver the Patterner) –gives her a place to stay in the Immanent Grove [SEE ALSO re Immanent Grove: 57-58 in “The Finder’]**

**IMMANENCE= spirituality fully present in physical world**

**Vs.**

**TRANSCENDENCE spirituality comes from place apart from physical world, though we can access it sometimes**

**Introspection in the Grove (226 -227): “Am I ensorcelled? Am I a sterile thing, not whole, not a woman? “ (226)  
“What do I want”? – the answer: “a greater fire than that, the flight, the flight burning—“ (227)**

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**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SUMMONER: p. 228: He had come back from the dead… but he falls into a breathing dead state (COMA) as Ged flies off with dragon**

**Summoner “ summoned myself again into life, to do what must be done” (229)—pushes Lebannen off the council and NO MORE talk of women!**

**Azver is now RESISTING HIM! He won’t go to the council that the Summoner has called… and he doubts Thorion will come.**

**Her bath in the stream—Irian’s sense that she’s being watched—by the Summoner!!! (“a sending”) 232**

**Her anger—heat! (232)—hugs the Patterner (232) –when we learn his name “Azver” (233)**

**(Thorion – the Summoner)**

**Namer says— “There are names beyond names” (234)**

**4 against 5 --the divided 9!**

**Irian says: “Maybe I came to destroy him.” (237)**

**IV Irian**

**WHAT THE PATTERNER HAS SEEN: (p. 239): ”patterns of the shaodws and the branches… had spoken of destruction, of transgression, of all things changed….It had come with her.”(239)**

**Thorion’s army… What the doorkeeper told the students (241)**

**243: Irian’s Declaration… and where her place is== ON THE GREEN HILL “where things are what they are. Tell the dead man I will meet him there.” (243)  
  
Her Transformation (245) --and the fall of Thorion (245-246)**