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Title: Ursula K Le Guin's Select Science Fiction

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Reviewer: J.Muthulekha

Reviewed by:

J. Muthulekha

Assistant Professor (Ad-Hoc),

NIT, Trichy

Creative mind is androgynous

--Coleridge

Science Fiction springs from the imagination of the creative mind. It quenches the thirst of the writer's ever longing, uncontrollable novelistic ideas and records the myth of future for its present findings in the world. It projects not only the essence of Science but also highlights the problems it creates to the world if it is mishandled by the society or an individual. Science fiction is a fine blend of science and imagination, divine and devil, vice and virtue, compliance and contradiction. Science fiction readers are in basks of the creative mind's dreams and soothes themselves under the shade of a number of enigmatic writers such as Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Heinlein, and Ursula K. Le Guin.

Ursula K. Le Guin is one among the enduring stars of Science fiction world. Her contribution to science fiction is unique in its ideas, potentiality and different perception of the world. Her achievements make her an indubitable phenomenon in the world of literature. Her simplicity and holistic perspectives on life and human beings make her a cosmic being to the world. She is noted for her versatile writings. Her contribution to Science fiction and Fantasy is so great that she dwells in the heart of the readers forever. Her novels surpass space and time and unite the entire universe by presenting utopian world and moral values for the sake of an entire mankind.

Being born to the famous Anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and the author Theodora Kroeber, Le Guin was influenced by anthropology and literature from her childhood. Her influence on science fiction tends her to make an attempt at the age of 11. But she fails as a writer for a brief time but her failure encourages her to achieve her destination. Her passion and determination makes her a well-known writer later.

Ursula K. Le Guin's writings evoke curiosity among the readers in such a way that it probes to question us 'What is next?' She highlights several ideas in her novels which make the work unique from the other science fiction works. Le Guin has written seven science fiction novels which can be categorized as Hainish Novels as the Hainish plays a predominant role among these planets. Though the story in each novel takes place in different planet, it is joined by a unique world named World of League or Hainish world. It is the universal space to which all the episodes in each planet relate. The Hainish world sends an envoy called Ekumen as a representative of this world of league

to various planets to observe and record the happenings in each world. At the same time, these Ekumens try to persuade the natives to join the Hainish cycle.

Le Guin's narrative technique is so unique that the readers find it hard to distinguish the fictitious world from the real world. The problems or major issues that we encounter in the real world are the common theme presented by Le Guin in her own unique style. Her first three novels *Rocannon's World* (1966), *Planet of Exile* (1966) and *City of Illusions* (1967) are collectively termed as "World of Exile and Illusion". Her two famous novels that claim her international readership are *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974). These two novels brought her the most precious Science fiction awards – Hugo and Nebula award twice in the following year. Her other Hainish cycle novels are *The Word for World is Forest* (1976) and *The Telling* (2000). The protagonist in these novels serve as vehicle to drive home the readers to the fictitious world that is beyond space and time. Through the protagonist's eyes the readers are able to view the entire socio-political and economic conditions that prevail in each planet. The narrative technique of Le Guin is so unique that the readers also undergo a mental journey with the protagonist and sometimes they empathize, regret and sometimes detached from the characters and observe the events as a silent observer. She makes an attempt to find the meaning in this meaningless world.

Her novels *World of Exile and Illusion* and *The Left Hand of Darkness* are interconnected by a common subject of narration. As Nudelman says, it is a "Union of Space civilizations". Though it appears as separate episodes, it is linked by an envoy from the World of League called Ekumen. The episode in each novel is presented in a simple, chronological order and takes place in a unified space. Ekumen stands as an abstract concept in her novel and made its presence in the absence. Through the envoy, we come to know the Ekumenical world and its function. Being Ekumen as a backdrop, the narrator starts to narrate the story in each novel and tries to unite the specified planet with the Ekumen world. As Rafail Nudelman points out that the first four tales depict four stages in the development of this idea:

- A world being drawn into the League or Ekumen (*The Left Hand of Darkness*)
- A world in the early stages of such involvement (*Rocannon's World*)
- A world which has virtually lost its former ties with the League (*Planet of Exile*)
- A world torn away from the League and striving to return to it (*City of Illusion*)

In each succeeding tale, it describes a new isolated planet that had its own history but shares its commonality with other planets by being or going to be a part of Ekumen world. The protagonist in these novels lives in solitude. They are far from the maddening crowd and remain undisturbed by the routine lives of the people but these aloof or unnatural forms of existence strive toward oneness. The plot is presented in such a way that these protagonists act as a device in the union of the whole human being. Though they belong to different planets, their love and affection towards the native is true and genuine and that resulted in their gratefulness of rescuing them from the enemies. They

are the man of the world. Le Guin's Science fiction depicts a different world inhabited by the individuated persons rather than entire society. It reflects the world of chaos dominated by the lust for power and luxurious life. Each tales were tied together by some conflict that arises in a particular planet and it has been observed and recorded by a common man to all these planets called Ekumen. But in the novel *Planet of Exile*, Le Guin presented a world that withdrawn from the World of League and tries to rescue themselves from the barbarians and the severe winter. This identical thematic structure leads the hero's journey towards the ultimate destination of oneness.

Snow plays an inevitable aspect in Le Guin's novels. Snow symbolizes the individual's realization of his mutual relationship with other. In *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Genly Ai's ultimate acceptance and love of Estraven happens only in the snowy Orogreyn. Falk in *Planet of Exile* identifies the companion and betrayer Estrel only in the severe snow storm. Agat and Rolery's love succeeds and ends in the union of two different tribes when they make an attempt to fight against the barbarians and the winter. Rocannon lost his traveler companion in the snowy area due to his faults and regrets for his deeds. Snow stands as the identifier of true love and treachery and reveals the protagonist's ultimate enlightenment from the cold darkness.

Light and dark imagery pervades throughout the pages of Le Guin's novels. Wholeness and balance is a recurrent theme in all her novels. As Douglas Barbour remarks, "Good emerges from ambiguous darkness, evil from blinding light". In *Rocannon's World*, the local image is "the Eye of the sea". It appears and goes on a journey till the novel ends. It starts in the prologue with Semley's search of her ancestors' precious necklace and appears throughout Rocannon's adventures until he gives it as a sign of finding his home to the Lady Gayne, who at the end of the story appears as his widow, tall and fair-haired, wearing a great blue jewel, set in gold at her throat".

In *Planet of Exile*, Fiia people represent light and Clayfolk refers to darkness. They live only in the light while Clayfolk chose "night and cave and swords". Le Guin attributes the light and the darkness to their characters. Light and dark act as an allegory as it makes the readers to visualize who they are. Both are netted together throughout the novel. When Rocannon meets the ancient One, he learns mind hearing only when he enters the 'dark place'. The success of his mission of exploding the enemy base is marked by "not the light but the darkness, the darkness that blinding his mind, the knowledge in his own flesh of the death of a thousand man all in one moment" (9).

In *Planet of Exile*, the fusion of dark and light is shown by the unification of dark far-born Agat and fair Rolery. As Rolery, "seemed to hold against her palm a handful of darkness, where his touch had been" (14). As they born in sunlight, they are scared of winter. But tries to survive against the cold dark by having an optimistic outlook and hope towards the future.

In the novel *The City of Illusion*, Falk begins and ends in darkness. First he encounters darkness when he had his mental chaos about his own identity and later the

second darkness helps him to know the real nature of the mind lying Shing and sought him a new way to escape from them.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness* Le Guin stresses the importance of the light/dark imagery. Genly Ai the Ekumen accepts and loves Estraven as a whole person by showing the Yin-Yang symbol: “Light, Dark, Fear, Courage, Female, male. It is yourself Therem. Both and one. A shadow on snow” (19).

Light and darkness reflects the wholeness in this comic universe. Darkness is essential to realize the value of light. Only in darkness of mind, the enlightenment occurs, only in the dark fetus, a new one emerges, only in the chaos, solution arises. Both are interrelated and intertwined for the betterment of the human beings. This idea of wholeness and balance is spoken by Le Guin in *The Left Hand of Darkness* as

Light is the left hand of darkness
And darkness the right hand of light
Two are one, life and death, lying
Together like lovers in kemmer,
Like the end and the way (252).

Oneness get from the blend of contradictions is a vital aspect in her novels. In the surface level, it is the reunification of the fragmented society but on the individual view, it is “a striving toward fellow beings and unification with them” (217).

In the novel *The Telling*, Le Guin highlights her binary opposition by telling the religion in the planet Aka:

On Aka, god is a word without referent. No capital letters. No creator, only creation...No binary Dark/Light, Evil/Good, or Body/Soul... No heavens, no hells...Right action is its own end. Dharma without Karma (95)

Journey and Return are other major themes in Le Guin’s novels. Journey represented in Le Guin’s novels are cyclic and it imbibes the truth that is inherent in our life.

Fulfilment, Shevek thought, is a function of time. The search for pleasure is circular, repetitive, atemporal. The variety-seeking of the spectator, the thrill-hunter, the sexually promiscuous, always the end and has to start over. It is not a journey and return, but a closed cycle, a cell (*The Dispossessed*, 275).

In her novels the initial and final situations are similar: Falk comes from unknown planet and returns to his planet, Shevek comes from Anarres to Urras but finally returns home and Genly Ai in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, after joining Karhide to the League of World returns to the place where he comes from. *Planet of Exile* starts with the fear of colonial invasion of barbarian and severe winter but ends with the triumph of natives against the barbarians and winter. Return plays a significant role in all her novels. In *The Dispossessed*, one can see the epitaph of Odo with the following lines:

To be whole is to be part;
True voyage is return (65).

Self plays an inevitable role in her novels. The ever longing quest of the protagonist i.e. separateness is accomplished in the process of unification with the other. As Nudelman remarks, “The Way to ‘I’ lies through ‘not-I’, through the realization of his own unity with others and of his opposition to everything that is ‘not-I’, in other words through culture. The protagonists in her novels alienate themselves from others and act as an observer of events in the initial stage and undergo journey towards truth. They neither suffer nor enjoy the things that prevail around them and accept what the time commands. But after attaining enlightenment, they participate in the welfare of the society and share their achievements with others. Rocannon rescues the native people from the enemy base and remains an icon in the eyes of the native. Agat, the far-born marries Rolery from different community and save both the tribes from the barbarians and winter. Shevek shares his precious invention called ansible for the welfare of the entire universe by handing over it to the Terra people. Falk rescues his planet Werel from the mind lying Shing. Genly Ai joins Karhide with the League of Worlds with the help of the selfless Estraven.

In all her novels, Le Guin stresses the androgynous nature of the human mind. Everything in this world is the mixture of contradictions. Without contradictory elements, it is too hard to realize the real one. In *The Telling*, Sutti described a holy book of Aka planet called The Arbor which was a “vast compendium of sophisticated philosophical reasonings on being and becoming, form and chaos, mystical meditations on the Making and the Made, and beautiful, difficult, metaphysical poems concerning the One that is Two, the Two that are One, all interconnected, illuminated, and complicated by the commentaries and marginalia of all the centuries since”(103). Being influenced by Taoism, Le Guin expresses the inextricable nature of matter and mind in her novels. Her works reflect her influence towards Yin and Yang theory that pervades throughout the novel in the mind of the protagonist. Le Guin’s critique against dualism and her egalitarian notion in her novels make her an outstanding enigma in the world of literature and make her a cosmic being crying for the entire being. Le Guin’s novels are the best instances of elucidating the importance of science and moral values that is essential for the fulfillment of one’s life. Wholeness and balance in her novels represent the wholeness and balance in the world that lie hidden in nature, unnoticed by the materialistic people. If one realizes this mutual relation that exists in nature, one will enjoy the eternal bliss in this mortal world. By her exquisite narrative style and her excellent themes against discrimination, Le Guin stands as an epitome for the present generation.

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