

Chapter 1 : The Unreal and the Real: Selected Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin

*On the other hand, read "Hand, Cup, Shell" or "The Matter of Segri." Then consider that there may really be no such thing as minor Le Guin, particularly if one is disposed to savor a command of the English language that remains nearly unequalled in the ranks of English-language sf and fantasy.*

Le Guin, one of the giants of the field whose work has transcended genre and literary categories. She pr The Unreal and the Real: She proudly identifies herself as a SF writer, but one whose intellectual rigor and literary ambitions have forced mainstream readers and critics to take notice and acknowledge. Le Guin has produced a steady stream of fiction, poetry, criticism for over 50 years. She is a champion of feminism, political and intellectual freedom, and ecological preservation. There is even a documentary about her life and legacy being produced by Arwen Curry called Worlds of Ursula K. However, until recently it has been difficult to get her best short stories and novellas in single volumes. Fortunately, Saga Press has recently come out with two books that address this issue. The first volume collects her most famous short stories it is by no means comprehensive, considering her output over many decades , which are selected by the author herself. I have previously reviewed these stories in two separate volumes but am glad to see them now combined in this attractive omnibus edition. So it comes down to your personal preferences as a reader. Where on Earth features four stories from her fictional Eastern European country of Orsinia, as well as numerous stories set in or inspired by Oregon, her home since Her prose is confident, luminous, fiercely honest, and firmly centered on people as they really are, flawed but with moments of strength and decency. She frequently sets her stories in small towns or the countryside " places where the sparse conditions let us focus on her characters. While I admired the craftwork of her realistic stories, I struggled to enjoy the Orsinian and Oregonian stories. One day she is assigned an adult patient labeled as psychotic, delusional, and violent. However, upon meeting him, he seems intelligent, well-spoken, and lucid. However, he quickly reveals his fear of undergoing electro-shock therapy. Initially she is skeptical of him, but as the sessions proceed she gains sympathy for him and starts to wonder exactly why he has been detained and whether he is truly mentally ill or not. To describe the any further would be to ruin the story, but suffice to say that many of the assumptions of her profession and world view are thrown on their head, and the ending is devastating. Another gem from Le Guin that explores her favorite themes of political and intellectual freedom. A short but imaginative story that uses a unique point of view to give a voice to the voiceless, and allows us to observe the folly of human affairs from a very unusual perspective. Takes a very creative approach to the Native American mythos of the trickster Coyote and a menagerie of animals in the American Southwest. Their open acceptance is contrasted with the crass behavior of humans in their towns and hunters with their guns who treat the natural world with contempt. Outer Space, Inner Lands contains a host of impressive stories, both her famous award-winners and lesser-known gems. All of them are intelligent, thought-provoking, understated, and beautifully written. As we journey through the various imaginary worlds she weaves, many set in her shared far-future Hainish universe, what becomes clear is that Le Guin is an anthropologist at heart, which is hardly surprising considering both her parents were well-known anthropologists: Alfred Kroeber, a renowned Professor of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, and his wife Theodora Kroeber, both of whom did pioneering work on California native American tribes, including the last surviving member of the Yahi tribe, named Ishi. While many SF authors use aliens as proxies for various human behaviors and cultures, Le Guin does something very different. In her Hainish universe, humanity arose on the planet Hain and seeded the stars with numerous human colonies including Terra , but after this League of Worlds collapsed, travel among these worlds ceased and many human worlds lost track of this galactic civilization and their own origins. This allows Le Guin to explore a limitless number of human societies that are frequently at a primitive level of technology, have developed unusual social structures, and in some cases have been modified dramatically via genetic engineering such as the androgynous characters of The Left Hand of Darkness. The behaviors of these different humans is often bizarre, unexpected, disturbing, and yet familiar. More of a parable than a story, a thought-experiment about the ethics of the greater good of an entire city vs. Is it okay for a child to suffer, if an entire city of people can live rich and fulfilling lives? I

understand this story is used in college classes and it is certainly well-suited to generating healthy debates. The first story set in her Hainish universe, and tells the folklore story of Semley, a high-born woman on the planet Fomalhaut, who enters the underworld in search of a valuable family heirloom that has disappeared long ago. She makes contact with a representative of the Ekumen and gets her wish, but at a heavy cost. This story introduces many of the anthropological themes of her Hainish stories, with a strong mythic fantasy tone. A story about identity, explored by contrasting the friendship of two individual scientists in a remote outpost with a ten-clone, a group of 10 men and women cloned from the same man, John Chow, sent to assist. They seem to be more efficient, self-contained, and mentally stable than the two men, until a crisis situation exposes their weaknesses. This is a fairly challenging story about a diverse crew from the Ekumen group of worlds that suffer the psychological stresses of faster-than-light travel. Using a process called transilience, they must establish a shared reality through story-telling in order to power the ship. Given all their different cultural beliefs and biases, this proves quite challenging. The concept of relativity is explored in very literal terms. This story is a part of a connected series of stories set in the twin worlds of Werel and Yeowe in the Hainish universe collected in *Four Ways to Forgiveness*. This for me was the highlight of this collection. It is a brilliantly developed study of a society in which women are dominant in the economy, politics, education, and all practical professions. That leaves the men with just two roles, isolated in their castles " sports and breeding siring children and serving as sex workers. In fact, women pay them for their services. While this may seem at first like an enviable position for men, Le Guin meticulously shows us their utter powerlessness. They are reduced to prized breeders and are given no other outlets or means of self-fulfillment. In particular, the cruel behavior towards men who are not prized at breeders parallels the intolerant treatment of women who cannot bear children. Towards the end of the story, we also see the vicious in-fighting among the men themselves. There is even the equivalent of an Equal Rights Movement, and it is bittersweet to see the men struggle to gain respect even after they are granted the right to higher education and other roles in society. I think this story is really an eye opener for younger readers in the West who have benefitted from far greater sexual equality than prior generations. *Solitude* , Nebula Award for Best Novelette: This is a deeply anthropological study of a female Observer who discovers her only means to study an isolated human society that maintains a strict code of men and women not mingling in adulthood is to use her own children to infiltrate their inner ranks and learn their social practices from within. What they discover is a harsh legacy of rampant overpopulation that led to a collapse in civilization and a warped social response. Women form aunt rings where they share stories and pass on knowledge. However, they otherwise do not speak to each other. This society is devoted mainly to silence and the development of the soul. The men face their own form of solitude " they spend their teenage years in harsh boy groups in which the strongest bully and sometimes kills the weaker members. For those that survive to adulthood, their fate is to live a hermetic existence in the forest, only being visited by women for child-bearing purposes. The most powerful part of the story is what happens after the mother takes her children away from these societies in order to gather the information they have learned from their experiences. The son is cooperative but the daughter is extremely resistant and desperately wants to return to her aunt ring and the cultivation of her soul. The conflict in values between mother and daughter is profound, and the difficult position of children bridging vastly divergent cultures is something I have seen first-hand. This story is filled with contrasts " the ruthless behavior of the men as they slaughter older people and take only the girls they want, and their fierce protectiveness of the girls as spoils of war. The gender roles of the society are sharply delineated, as are the gaps between the Dirt people and Crown people. The themes of formal slavery Dirt people and effective slavery wives are also prevalent. This is a grim story with a tragic ending. *The Flyers of Gy* This story reads like a field report about the Gy people, among whom a small minority develop functioning wings at adulthood. However, this is frequently viewed as a curse rather than a gift, and we are shown a myriad of brutal and repressive responses to this trait in various communities. Often the flyers are stoned to death or killed in even more perverse ways. This is a clear parable of discrimination against those who are different, and how they cope. *The Silence of the Asonu* Here we have a mysterious society that is probably unlikely, but intriguing as a concept. Imagine a society that voluntarily chooses silence after a normal childhood. And yet not a grim silence, but within a well-adjusted

and caring social structure, but lacking in both verbal and non-verbal communication. In keeping with religious ascetics, their silence could be a form of spiritual wisdom. Or perhaps just a means of minimizing social conflict. Other people are fascinated by the Asonu, leading to a thriving tourist trade. The Author of the Acacia Seeds Here is a little treat about therolinguistics, the study of animal languages. Written in academic journal style, it is both humorous and completely serious. Only someone intimately familiar with academic disciplines could create a story so strange and yet totally convincing. If a non-communicative, vegetative art exists, we must rethink the very elements of our science, and learn a whole new set of techniques. But the problem was far greater. The art he sought, if it exists, is a non-communicative art: It is possible that Time, the essential element, matrix, and measure of all known animal art, does not enter into vegetable art at all. The plants may use the meter of eternity. We do not know.

**Chapter 2 : Summary/Reviews: The unreal and the real :**

*Click to read more about Hand, Cup, Shell (short story) by Ursula K. Le Guin. LibraryThing is a cataloging and social networking site for booklovers All about Hand, Cup, Shell (short story) by Ursula K. Le Guin. LibraryThing is a cataloging and social networking site for booklovers.*

Le Guin sold her first short story. Since then her books have been read, taught, quoted, thrust upon acquaintances, put at the top of Occupy reading lists. Over the course of a long, unpredictable, idiosyncratic career, she has written contemporary fiction, historical fiction, poetry, and essays. But she still has one unfulfilled ambition: She told me recently, "I would love to see somebody, somewhere, sometime, just talk about me as an American novelist. Now, however, with several Le Guin publishing projects going on, it may be time to rethink her legacy. I like to picture future American literature students electronically thumbing through copies of The Le Guin Reader. Because people have their own Le Guin, the works that speak most directly to them, I fantasize about editing that reader. Her Earthsea fantasy series was recently published as a complete set, for the first time in the US. A book of her new and selected poetry, *Finding My Elegy*, has just come out. She helped teach a generation of young writers to mix literature with the low-culture energy of genre. Mitchell told me that it was reading Le Guin as a child that made him want to become a writer. Enthralled by the Earthsea books, he wanted to do to others what had just been done to him. Sometimes I think my writing life is the theory, practice and emulation of that same trick. She was and remains a central figure for me. What makes her so extraordinary for me is that her commitment to the consequences of our actions, of our all too human frailties, is unflinching and almost without precedent for a writer of such human optimism. She never turns away from how flinty the heart of the world is. It gives her speculations a resonance, a gravity that few writers, mainstream or generic, can match. Dystopias are a piece of cake to write, but utopias usually die of implausibility by page five. Dick-inspired *The Lathe of Heaven* is set in a future composed of dreams. *The Left Hand of Darkness* takes place on a planet where people have no fixed gender. Yet these books are also wholly literary: But as she taught young readers to love genre, she moved on, experimenting with combinations of genre and realism. Since the late s, her short stories have been the place where she tries out new forms. The first four stories in *Where on Earth* are entirely realistic but set in the invented Eastern European country of Orsinia. Two, written in the s, grapple with themes of political and personal freedom. A sequel from just after the fall of the Wall, "Unlocking the Air," is powerfully, joyously hopeful. In "Buffalo Gals" a lost child finds a new mother in Coyote, the trickster of Indian myth. The dreamlike, haunting "Texts" is about decoding the messages of objects. It would only shift in space. In "Mazes," an alien creature forced to push knobs for a researcher gives the most expressive performance of his life for an experimenter who can never understand. In "The Author of the Acacia Seeds," linguists decipher the autobiography of an ant and the poetry of penguins, "written almost entirely in wings, neck, and air. I might have exchanged them for one of her stories set on the planet O, where a marriage consists of four people, or "The Seasons of the Ansarac," which asks what would happen if human sexuality were seasonal, like that of birds. But like I said, people have their own Le Guin. Many of the characters in her science fiction and fantasy have dark skin. Andrea Hairston is a professor of drama at Smith College and author of the award-winning *Redwood and Wildfire*, a historical novel with fantasy elements about two vaudeville performers, one a Seminole Indian, one a black "hoodoo woman. Too much else denies who I am or who I could imagine myself to be. As a young writer in the s, she told me, she had struggled to find a place for herself. Looking for fertile ground for her own fiction, she tried inventing it, setting her stories in an imaginary Eastern European country she called Orsinia. In Orsinia it was easier for her to write about political freedom without slipping into polemic. Political and intellectual liberty is an important theme for Le Guin. In one of the conversations she and I have been having about her work, she told me it was partly a response to being young in America in the s. It had to do with just thinking and being, in a society that really did seem to be shutting the doors and windows and becoming more stifling. But when they were first written, in the s, no one would publish them, and in search of an audience Le Guin found her way into science fiction. Although it was not the kind of writing a passionately intellectual,

fiercely ambitious young writer was expected to do, she found it gave her both distance and room for her energy. Shevek, the hero of *The Dispossessed*, argues for an intellectual freedom he himself may never see. For many of the citizens of Orsinia, the Wall falls too late. She has sympathy for these transitional characters, she told me, because she feels like one herself. But that may just mean that the context is still to come. In a recent blog post, she argued that imaginative literature always has the potential to be subversive. Must they be as they are? What might they be like if they were otherwise? There really is nothing to fear in fantasy unless you are afraid of the freedom of uncertainty.

Chapter 3 : Ursula Le Guin's The Unreal and the Real: Collected Stories, reviewed.

*The Unreal and the Real, selected stories of Ursula K. Le Guin.*

Previously, staff editors had taken on the fiction-dealing role in turn. Charles McGrath was described as "a" fiction editor, or as "head of the fiction department," in a time period after Roger Angell was described as the "chief fiction editor" somewhat like his mother before him, and also there was Daniel Menaker. Four of them appear near the end of the books, where the favorites, the curtain-closers, the encores, go. I was feeling good. I was feeling like rewriting the Bible," Le Guin writes amazingly! That and a story called "Sur" are her favorites, and the closers, of that volume. Advertisement They are not my favorites, as sweet as they are. How wonderful that these publications existed and published and even sometimes paid. I hope everyone involved had so much fun. At least from here in cold, so much closer to the end of the world, it looks like a cozy sun porch on an apple farm. I do hate being wrong, so I will not. The genre wars are back again, or never stopped. Arthur Krystal took up the case hard again on Oct. They are not, he thinks. None of this argument really makes sense, once he has declared all genre commercial, and particularly in light of the fact that there is no genre more stultifying and isolating and self-referential than the contemporary literary novel. I personally find its conventions revolting. The literary novel is, make no mistake, as much a pileup of inherited conventions as the worst werewolf cash-in. There are now thousands of young, MFA-toting writers, so many of them aping the weak generation of literary male novelists now in their 50s: While of course we can and likely should divide novels into commercial and noncommercial, that dividing line, because the actual book marketplace is drowning in silly, wand-waving, superpowered teenage trampires, is certainly not to be painted down between "genre" at large and the whiny, alienated, modernist rehash that is considered the "quality novel. These are extremely dense, interior, thorny, and realistic kinds of stories, some of which take place in her invented Central European country of Orsinia. These are beautiful and a kick in the teeth at first, but once you are inside them, you are all the way in. Take "A Week in the Country," in which a young man falls in love at the rural home of his college friend and then falls ill and stays on. His crush considers him: Advertisement He would get well, would go back a week late to the city, to the three bedsteads and five roommates, shoes on the floor and rust and hairs in the washbasin, classrooms, laboratories, after that employment as an inspector of sanitation on State farms in the north and northeast, a two-room flat in State housing on the outskirts of a town near the State foundries, a black-haired wife who taught the third grade from State-approved textbooks, one child, two legal abortions, and the hydrogen bomb. Oh was there no way out, no way? Or no hydrogen bomb. It made no difference. That is from In it, humans enslave a planet, thereby teaching their slaves war. To return to the genre argument, it would be easier, and more generic and more commercial, to have written a timely novel set on Earth about environmentalism and imperialism. Setting it on another planet is exactly what allows her to "elevate" barf? She ambles into a different mode with her Oregon stories, like "Hand, Cup, Shell," about a family at a beach house, which has all the shininess of To the Lighthouse. Advertisement A tongue of the tide ran up the sand between them, crosscurrents drawing lines across it, and hissed softly out again. The horizon was a blue murk, but the sunlight was hot. He always saw the invaluable treasures, the dollars of no currency; he went on finding Japanese glass netfloats every winter on this beach, years after the Japanese had given up glass floats for plastic, years after anyone else had found one. Some of the floats he found had limpets growing on them. Bearded with moss and in garments green, they had floated for years on the great waves, tiny unburst bubbles, green, translucent earthlets in foam galaxies, moving away, drawing near. Once we are off the planet, the often, not always more recent stories, in Volume 2, become more welcoming. Over time, like most all of us, it also feels like Le Guin becomes even more secure, less flamboyant, more affecting. Sometimes by all of those. She has taken on the culture and cannot bear to leave. There is something magic in these stories within stories, or stories as stories, and she exploits their form just so naturally and perfectly. These are untouchable as stories. Their perfection resists unpacking. Advertisement One thinks of Le Guin, obviously, as a pacifist. Check her blog for that—she also has a great cat. There is often the sense of an allegory hanging, fat and dreadful, nearby, but Le Guin always pushes it just beyond, out of mind. The Word

for *World is Forest* is on some level obviously about Vietnam and equally obviously on some level about the environment. But neither it, nor any of the novels, nor any of the stories collected here are "problem" stories though it is in the shortest stories where she can veer closest to allegory, or "message," or can try something just a bit more silly or ham-fisted. Still, even at the shortest and most close to pat, none of these works are logical arguments. They never descend to lecture. They always transcend, and they are always about people, and she is not a moralist. But it is the project of a pacifist, or leftist, or however she would most happily describe herself, that many of these writings are about horror, and therefore about violence. The distress of people is displayed in the quiet, tooth-drilling way that only Le Guin can command. We must be shaken by what actual humans do for it to be distressing again. We are always having to give up on being horrified by the day to day. It takes an art to reinvigorate our feelings. The only thing that would be more wonderful than this collection of stories would be the publication of *The Complete Novellas of Ursula K. Le Guin*, though given her affection for that form, such a book might have to be either back-breaking or digital-only. But even kept to shorts, *The Unreal and the Real* guns from the grim to the ecstatic, from the State to the Garden of Eden, with just one dragon between. Every collection needs one dragon. In every good career-spanning collection, you can observe an author growing into her authority. Here, every story, in its own way and from its own universe, told in its own mode, explains that there is no better spirit in all of American letters than that of Ursula Le Guin. Some of my time went to gathering and gardening and mending and all the dull, repetitive actions of primitive life, and some went to singing and thinking the songs and stories I had learned here at home and while scouting, and the things I had learned on the ship, also. Soon enough I found why women are glad to have children come to listen to them, for songs and stories are meant to be heard, listened to. When they left, I went on in silence. Sometimes I joined the singing circle to give what I had learned travelling to the older girls. And that was all I did; except that I worked, always, to be aware of all I did. By solitude the soul escapes from doing or suffering magic; it escapes from dullness, from boredom, by being aware. Nothing is boring if you are aware of it. It may be irritating, but it is not boring. If it is pleasant the pleasure will not fail so long as you are aware of it. Being aware is the hardest work the soul can do, I think.

#### Chapter 4 : Ursula K. Le Guin | LibraryThing

*A collection of short stories by the legendary and iconic Ursula K. Le Guin—selected with an introduction by the author, and combined in one volume for the first time. The Unreal and the Real is a collection of some of Ursula K. Le Guin's best short stories. She has won multiple prizes and.*

Oregon Book Award winner. World Fantasy and Locus award finalist. Le Guin is a gift to the world, to the cosmos even. Her works have inspired generations of readers to imagine the endless possibilities of the universe and our own imaginations. The first volume includes terrestrial stories full of magical realism and satirical wit. The second volume covers the celestial and the fantastical, straying to the stars and beyond. A perfect addition to any library. Five centuries from now they might ask if their author ever really existed, or if Le Guin was an identity made from the work of many writers rolled into one. A millennium on and her stories will be so familiar, like myths and fairytales today, that only dedicated scholars will ask who wrote them. Such is the fate of the truly great writers, whose stories far outlive their names. Her work gives voice to the voiceless, hope to the outsider, and speaks truth to power. This two-volume selection of almost forty stories taken from her eleven collections was made by Le Guin herself, as was the organizing principle of splitting the stories into the nominally realistic and fantastic. Both volumes include new introductions by the author. The Unreal and the Real is a much-anticipated event which will delight, amuse, and provoke. Listen to Ursula K. Listen to an interview with Ursula K. Read an interview with Ursula K. Whether her stories are set in worlds beyond this one or in the building down the street, Le Guin is an astonishing creator and chronicler of communities, and an observer of the ways in which we interact, for good and for bad. These books serve as a fine reminder of that. Sometimes I think my writing life is the theory, practice and emulation of that same trick. What makes her so extraordinary for me is that her commitment to the consequences of our actions, of our all too human frailties, is unflinching and almost without precedent for a writer of such human optimism. She never turns away from how flinty the heart of the world is. It gives her speculations a resonance, a gravity that few writers, mainstream or generic, can match. Too much else denies who I am or who I could imagine myself to be. She was and remains a central figure for me. She is one of the most iconic of all living writers, in or out of genre. This two-volume set provides an amazing look at the sheer depth and breadth of her short fiction—and should further add to her influence and her legacy. The stories add up to a masterclass in contemporary fiction, divided according to setting—the ones in Where On Earth all take place on some version of this planet, with Outer Space, Inner Lands visiting locations further afield. Every collection needs one dragon. In every good career-spanning collection, you can observe an author growing into her authority. Here, every story, in its own way and from its own universe, told in its own mode, explains that there is no better spirit in all of American letters than that of Ursula Le Guin.

#### Chapter 5 : Bookslut | The Real and Unreal: Ursula K. Le Guin, American Novelist

*Ursula K. Le Guin died on January 22, just a few weeks ago. In tribute, I made a menu from The Left Hand of Darkness, dreaming up foods Ai and Estraven could have brought on their perilous journey over the ice—or eaten at its end, when they stumble into a "hot shop" and are once again warmed by humankind.*

#### Chapter 6 : Hand, Cup, Shell (short story) by Ursula K. Le Guin | LibraryThing

*A collection of short stories by the legendary and iconic Ursula K. Le Guin—selected with an introduction by the author, and combined in one volume for the first time. The Unreal and the Real is a collection of some of Ursula K. Le Guin's best short stories.*

#### Chapter 7 : The unreal and the real : selected stories of Ursula K. Le Guin | Search Results | IUCAT East

*"Ursula K. Le Guin is a gift to the world, to the cosmos even. Her works have inspired generations of readers to imagine the endless possibilities of the universe and our own imaginations. Nowhere is the power of Le Guin's voice more evident than in the nearly forty stories selected for these stunning collections.*

### Chapter 8 : The Unreal and the Real: The Selected Short Stories of Ursula K. Le Guin by Ursula K. Le Guin

*Ursula K. Le Guin is undoubtedly one of the titans of science fiction and fantasy—indeed, perhaps, the most influential living genre writer. Her books—the Earthsea Cycle, The Dispossessed, The Left Hand of Darkness, and dozens more—have won countless awards and earned the respect of readers.*

### Chapter 9 : The Unreal and the Real: Outer Space, Inner Lands : Small Beer Press

*On the other hand, read 'Hand, Cup, Shell' or 'The Matter of Segri.' Then consider that there may really be no such thing as minor Le Guin, particularly if one is disposed to savor a command of the English language that remains nearly unequalled in the ranks of English-language sf and fantasy.*