

The Left Hand of Darkness



Ursula Kroeber Le Guin (October 21, 1929 – January 22, 2018) was an American author. Le Guin was born in Berkeley, California, to author Theodora Kroeber and **anthropologist** Alfred Louis Kroeber.

Cultural anthropology, Taoism, feminism, and the writings of Carl Jung all had a strong influence on Le Guin's work. Many of her stories used anthropologists or cultural observers as protagonists, and Taoist ideas about balance and equilibrium have been identified in several writings.

Brain Worms Artist	The Biologist	Genly Ai (Anthropologist)
Proposes a multifaceted environment	Studies multifaceted environment	Studies multifaceted environment
Engages with the (un)natural world	Engages with the unnaturalised world	Engages with the alien natural world
Landscape	The Sublime (desolation)	The Sublime (desolation)
Tries not to dictate	Doesn't dictate - assimilates	Attempts to assimilate
Post-truth (post image)	Post-truth (unreliable/ambiguous narration)	Truth-aligned but unreliable (from a person's point of view)
Opens the picture	Enters the open picture	

Epic in the mundane	Epic in the mundane (the pool)	Epic in the biological mundane
---------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------

Genly Ai at the beginning of the novel addresses the question/issue on the nature of truth etc:

“I’ll make my report as if I told a story, for I was taught as a child on my homeworld that **Truth is a matter of the imagination**. The soundest fact may fail or prevail in the style of its telling: like that singular organic jewel of our seas, which grows brighter as one woman wears it and, worn by another, dulls and goes to dust. **Facts are no more solid, coherent, round, and real, than pearls are**. But both are sensitive. The story is not all mine, nor told by me alone. Indeed I am not sure whose story it is; you can judge better. But it is all one, and if at moments the facts seem to alter with an altered voice, why then **you can choose the fact that you like the best**; yet none of them are false, and **it is all one story**.”

- The only Truth is all of the truths - similar to the Blockchain? Without all of the servers to corroborate the truth, the Truth of the Blockchain wouldn’t be reliable.

“My landlady, a voluble man...”

Genly Ai is unable to even consider using ‘they’ or ‘person/people’ - has to say he/man (!) - showing limitations of human to describe things without comparing them to things we already know (eg. Niamh’s flourishing penchant for the visual metaphor and analogies). If all of the people on Winter are homologously physically asexual, then are their relationships?

Genly does however finally reach the point of coming to terms with the truth of the dualism of the

Genly notes that the cultural shock of Winter planet was nothing in comparison to the **‘biological shock’** - is perhaps the BIOLOGICAL SHOCK a key aspect of scifi or futuristic developments or transhumanism or the metaverse etc?

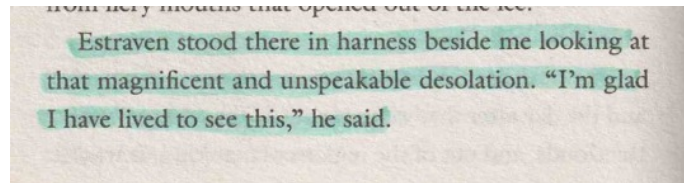
Similarities to Annihilation and ‘the brightness’ - and suspending the rate of brightness by inducing biological shock (if the biologist was injured or hurt etc).

“To oppose something is to maintain it. They say here “all roads lead to Mishnory.” To be sure, if you turn your back on Mishnory and walk away from it, you are still on the Mishnory road.”

Key Themes:

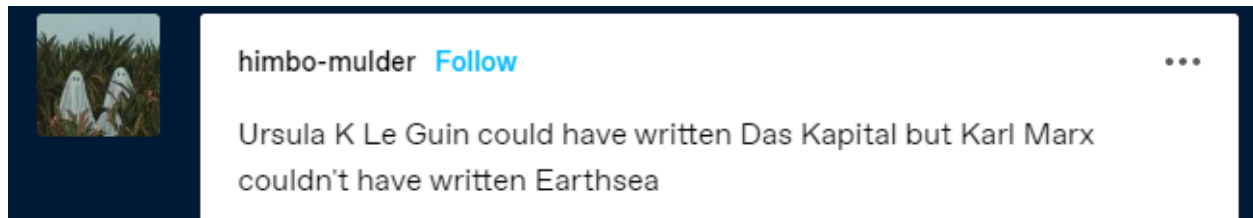
- Light & dark (taoism)
- Sexuality & gender etc
- Social structures
- War & nationalism/patriotism
- Self-sacrifice (something bigger than an individual)
- Religion
- Shifgrethor

- The Sublime (Nature)
- Desolation

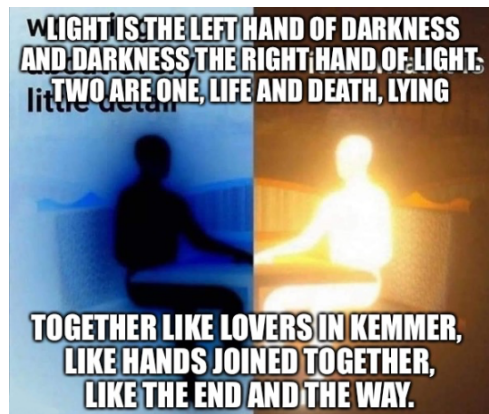


The Ekumen - used as a structure to hold interstellar exploration, according to Le Guin. An example of collectivism??

Invented language - communication



Meme culture + The Left Hand of Darkness



IGNORANCE & EDUCATION

:Infection of KNowledge:

“To learn which questions are unanswerable, and not to answer them: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness.”

Answers CLOSE!!

The Handarra are always striving towards IGNORANCE - why? & why is this not the same as anti-intellectualism (or is it the same?)

“my business is unlearning, not learning.”
“But we in the Handdara don’t want answers. It’s hard to avoid them, but we try to.”

Alternatively, the discovery that conventional human identity is a form of cultural imprisonment may be as harrowing for the alien mind as it is for those most directly concerned. Ursula Le Guin uses a mixture of human, alien, and impersonal viewpoints in *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), which portrays the slow and difficult growth of personal love between Genly Ai (anagram of “alien g(u)y”?), the human envoy to the planet Gethen, and the Gethenian politician Estraven. Kurt Vonnegut in *The Sirens of Titan* (1959) shows both humans and aliens realizing that their supposed identity is a form of conditioning, a literal “alienation” that has been programmed into them for reasons unknown. Winston Niles Rumfoord disappears after announcing that the goal of
(academic article, source <unk> - Alien G(u)y !!!)

“*To oppose something is to maintain it.* They say here “all roads lead to Mishnory.” To be sure, if you turn your back on Mishnory and walk away from it, you are still on the Mishnory road.”

‘To learn which questions are unanswerable, *and not to answer them*: this skill is most needful in times of stress and darkness’

“my job is not to arrive at an answer and just deliver it, I see my job as holding doors open and opening windows, but who comes through the doors, what you see through the windows...how do I know”