



Hainish Novels & Stories, Vol. 1: Rocannon's World / Planet of Exile / City of Illusions / The Left Hand of Darkness / The Dispossessed / Stories

Ursula K. Le Guin , Brian Attebery (Editor)

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Beginning in the 1960s and 70s, Ursula K. Le Guin redrew the map of modern science fiction. In such visionary masterworks as the Nebula and Hugo Award winners *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*, she imagined a galactic confederation of human colonies founded by the planet Hain—an array of worlds whose divergent societies, the result of both evolution and genetic engineering, afford a rich field for literary explorations of “the nature of human nature,” as Margaret Atwood has described Le Guin’s subject. Now, for the first time, the complete Hainish novels and stories are collected in a definitive two-volume *Library of America* edition, with new introductions by the author.

Le Guin first conceived her League of All Worlds in three early novels of daring inventiveness. In *Rocannon's World* (1966), Hainish scientist Gaverel Rocannon ventures to an unnamed planet to conduct a peaceful ethnological survey only to discover a secret outpost of the League’s deadly enemy. In *Planet of Exile* (1966), the fate of colonists from Earth stranded on distant Werel depends on working together with the planet’s indigenous peoples if they are to survive the oncoming fifteen-year winter. *City of Illusions* (1967), set far in the future on a sparsely populated Earth that has lost contact with all other planets and is ruled by the mysterious, mind-lying Shing, turns on the appearance of an amnesiac with yellow eyes who may hold the key to humanity’s freedom.

In *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) Earth-born Genly Ai travels to wintry Gethen to convince its nations to join the Ekumen, the confederation of known worlds. To do so he must navigate the subtleties of politics and culture on a planet populated by an ambisexual people who have never known war. This is the novel that inspired Harold Bloom to observe that “Le Guin, more than Tolkien, has raised fantasy into high literature.”

The Dispossessed (1974), a philosophical adventure story in which a physicist strives to complete a theory of simultaneity that will for the first time allow instantaneous communication between all the planets of humanity, is set against the backdrop of Le Guin’s richly textured vision of what an anarchist society might look like in practice.

Also included are four short stories and six essays about the novels, plus the surprising original 1969 version of the story “Winter’s King.” The endpaper map of Gethen has been colorized from a drawing by Le Guin herself.

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From Reader Review Hainish Novels & Stories, Vol. 1: Rocannon's World / Planet of Exile / City of Illusions / The Left Hand of Darkness / The Dispossessed / Stories for online ebook

Brendan says

These novels and stories display Le Guin's powers in full force, and the ideas expanded upon within them remain revolutionary today.

Darwin8u says

"...all are the stars, and the darkness between the stars: and all are bright."

- Ursula K. Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness

Ursula K. Le Guin's Hainish Novels & Stories, Vol. 1 is LOA N°296 and contains the following works:

1. Rocannon's World: Read - Apr 26, 2018
 2. Planet of Exile: Read - Apr 27, 2018
 3. City of Illusions: Read - April 28, 2018
 4. The Left Hand of Darkness: Read - May 1, 2018
 5. The Dispossessed: Read - June 15, 2014
 6. Stories: Hit and missed. Will review as part of a couple other books.
-

David says

There is something marvelous reading a well made book. And, something even more so when it contains the works of a master story teller. Le Guin's Hainish novels and stories are a wonderful treasure trove of ideas and language and philosophy. She loves to talk about journeys, but physical and internal, and I love to take the journeys with her and her characters.

Jason Bergman says

I've already logged/reviewed most of the contents of this book individually, but this is specifically to count all the *other* stuff that's in here. Needless to say, this book is amazing. You get some of the greatest sci-fi ever written, plus loosely connected short stories and other supplemental material. If you have any interest in Le Guin, this is a pretty great place to start.

Rick says

While I just finished reading all the material collected in this amazing omnibus edition, I've actually begun reading these novels and stories in 2010. This collection is certainly a very high *Rickommendation*.

On *The Left Hand of Darkness*: Like Le Guin's other sci-fi novels the focus here is not on future history or scientific developments or even playing around with how people interact with almost magical technologies, the focus here is about humanity. Some people have called Le Guin's approach to sci-fi as if it is "soft" sci-fi. I suppose this means that they see "hard" sci-fi as the stuff of laser beams, black holes, FTL space travel and alien species with a taste for human flesh. Except it seems that these typical troupes and conventions of sci-fi as a genre are just window dressing for a lot of masculine adolescent fantasies. Clearly the high adventure style sci-fi, or Space Operas, like Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, John Carter of Mars and David Starr, Space Ranger are not "hard" sci-fi at all but merely easy sci-fi. What Le Guin does best is approach situations from a different focal point in order to examine the human condition. In this novel that is exactly what she's doing. She's not looking at how weapons of mass destruction could be used to conquer an alien species, but she recognizes that the most devastatingly effective weapons of mass destruction are ignorance and intolerance. That's the focus of this book. Here is a culture that is so exquisitely realized that the reader could be forgiven in suddenly finding our own culture alien. This world building on the grandest scale but, once again, the focus is not on the nuts and bolts but on the motivations, the expectations and the interactions. This is the stuff that fiction in general strives desperately to become: relevant regarding the human condition. Le Guin lures the reader into a densely realized world of complex social structure and even more complex human interactions, but she does so with an envious degree of simplicity. The descriptions of social structure and human relationships is offered in an almost casual manner. Le Guin effectively shows us the differences and thus never has a need to tell us anything. Le Guin is truly one of the greatest American storytellers.

On *The Dispossessed*: Le Guin is undeniably one of the finest writers if speculative fiction in American Literature, but I'd include her not only as ne of the finest writers of American Literature, but also one of the finest writers - period. I haven't read all of her works, but when I'd read this one it immediately rose up to become one of my personal favorite novels of all time. Le Guin not only weaves her usual magical prose into a narrative that is as topical and poignant now as it was when it was first published, but she also delivers a subtle and compelling treatise on what a truly anarchist society would be like. This book is a novel, but it's also the study of a theoretical social model and it is delivered with astonishingly vivid detail. The reader can almost smell the atmospheric texture of the protagonist's society, not to mention seeing the conspicuous consumption of the culture he visits. Anyone looking for an excellent book to use to break doe en the concepts of utopia and dystopia as used in literature would be a complete fool to ignore this book. It is as rich with social commentary as it is with fascinating characters characters. Quite simply this is one of the finest books by one of the finest authors.

On *Rocannon's World*, *Planet of Exile* & *City of Illusions*: These three short novels are some pretty early work by Le Guin. There are also a lot of fantasy elements here that don't quite jive with the more complex works like *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed*. Still there's a lot of interesting characters, provocative themes and wonderfully realized worlds. Le Guin may not have been at the top of her form with these early works, but the promise of amazing things to come is there and they are still entertaining stories.

On the stories and essays included: I can not praise Le Guin highly enough. She was a master wordsmith who knew how to turn a phrase and catch the readers attention. As I said earlier, this collection is certainly a very high *Rickommendation*.

Robert says

Rocannon's World

Le Guin's first Hainish novel is as much fantasy as science fiction and as much derived from Norse myth as anything contemporary. It's slight but distinctive, more fun than profound. It saved my interest in Le Guin's SF, though, after I was heavily put off by *The Dispossessed*, which I found slow, dull and obvious - in sharp contrast to seemingly everybody else who's read it.

Planet of Exile

Probably the most conventional SF adventure tale Le Guin ever wrote and yet it shows glimmers of the concerns that would become trade-mark Le Guin themes; clash of cultures, reconciliation of differences, anthropology. Surprisingly violent.

City of Illusions

I liked this much more first time round, I think because it was the best Le Guin SF novel I had read at the time. Since then, *Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Lathe of Heaven* have completely overshadowed all these early works about the League of All Worlds. I'm not sure Le Guin has ever been all that comfortable with the technological trappings of SF or the pew! pew! of simplistic adventure/space opera stories. Her strengths lie in character and culture. The opportunity to imagine completely different societies is what SF&F gave her and when she shifted to play to her strengths her great works began to flow. Nevertheless, our protagonist's struggles when he arrives in the City of Illusions are still psychologically compelling to me and the description of a heavily depopulated North America are fun.

The Left Hand of Darkness

My re-reading of this was heavily disrupted by having to focus on other books as a matter of urgency. Nevertheless I enjoyed it greatly, as previously. This time I was struck by how everything goes wrong through mis-communication. Genli Ai can't understand the rules of the alien culture he's been dropped in, alone and with no immediate help to hand. On Gethen people can only communicate obliquely and this compounds the political shenanigans surrounding Genli's arrival. The confusion ultimately causes death. Nothing goes right until people start talking to each other openly and honestly.

It's nothing to do with gender, but it's what I took from this reading.

Winter's King

OK, *now* I want to talk about gender. The original version of this story was written prior to *Left Hand of Darkness* and is re-printed in the appendix of this volume. This version was re-written after *Left Hand* was published and it switches from referring to everybody on Gethen as "he" to referring to everybody as "she." Immediately I switched from thinking of the characters as male to thinking of them as female. But they are both and neither.

I've never come across a better illustration of why we need gender-neutral pronouns in English. It's looking like "they" is going to win out despite the consequent singular-plural ambiguity.

Also, good story about the effects of special relativity!

Winter's King

1969 (original) version. Not as good as the later revision.

Jason says

This is a rating for the book as a whole, not for the individual stories within. I have written about the 5 novels in this edition separately.

This edition is a fantastic collection. It not only brings the first 5 novels of the Hainish Cycle together, but it also provides you with the novels' introductions that Le Guin wrote for each of them in the 2010s. Le Guin is not only a wonderful writer and storyteller; she is talented at looking at her own work with a loving and critical eye.

In addition to the novels and introductions, this volume includes a handful of short stories that delve into the Hainish mythos, all but one of them revisiting worlds established in the novels.

All that in a compact volume that is built to last. It's a great purchase all around if you're planning a deep dive into Le Guin's early works.

Rob Hermanowski says

This is the first of a two-book set by the wonderful Library of America collecting all the "Hainish" related writings of Ursula K. Le Guin. I've experienced (and reviewed) all the early novels in audiobook form, and now read all the shorter stories, essays, and novel introductions that Le Guin wrote that are contained in this volume. Another Goodreads reviewer described this compilation as being greater than the sum of its parts, and I completely agree. Although Le Guin initially did not intend for these stories to form part of a larger collection, they definitely do feel like a comprehensive group. I think this is due to both the great breadth of Le Guin's imagination and her immense skill with the written word, and I'm eagerly looking forward to reading the later "Hainish" writings.

Rachel Johansson says

Le Guin uses fantasy and science fiction to ask questions about what it means to be human, to be free, and how we encounter the 'other.' This is why she was such a great writer.

Ben says

As a physical artifact, it's hard to beat books published by the Library of America: the book is weighty but not oppressive. The individual pages are creamy and delicate with beautiful print that manages to not bleed through the immaculately thin setting.

Of course, the interior of this particular book is also a treat, containing not only a number of truly excellent and mind-bending works of fiction (The Left Hand of Darkness and The Dispossessed are treasures) but a number of stories stitched together in a way that show Le Guin's evolution as an author and thinker throughout her life. Her introduction is also worth the price of admission (free from your public library!); she explains the evolution of her thinking in terms of the League of All Worlds and the Ansible, a device that allows instantaneous communication regardless of distance apart.

It is always a joy to read Le Guin, and this book is a wonderful introduction to the Hainish cycle.

Ryan Young says

This is science fiction at its best. Holding a mirror up to humanity and asking tough questions with surprising answers. This volume has the bonus of several short stories and essays. I think I love reading Le Guin writing ABOUT writing just as much as I love reading her ... writing.

Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says

Done with volume 1 of Ursula Le Guin's Hainish stories and novels! The whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts. It's an amazing achievement, definitely worth reading for any fan of science fiction, or even of political philosophies, or of feminism. The novels and stories definitely gained in meaning and resonance from being read close together. (It took me about 6 weeks to get through all 1000+ pages.)

This volume contains five novels:

Rocannon's World

Planet of Exile

City of Illusions

The Left Hand of Darkness

The Dispossessed

Also four short stories and several essays and commentaries.

Full review to come.

I received a free copy of this book (and Volume 2 as well) from the publisher for review.

Andrea Roberts says

DNF Left Hand of Darkness It's an interesting concept but there is no real plot that moves forward

Martin Hernandez says

Ma pregunto como es que siendo yo un fanático declarado de la Ciencia Ficción, nunca había leído algo de **Ursula K. Le GUIN**, reconocida como una de las escritoras más originales e influyentes del género, ganadora de varios premios Hugo y Nebula, entre muchos otros, y la primera mujer distinguida con el título de “Gran Maestra” de la Asociación de Escritores de Ciencia Ficción y Fantasía (SFWA). No exagero al decir que ella sola revolucionó y revitalizó la ciencia ficción con sus novelas enmarcadas en el Universo Hainish. Afortunadamente para mí, la Librería de América recopiló las obras del “Ciclo Hainish” en dos volúmenes, de los cuales el primero contiene:

Rocannon's World (1966), importante porque esta historia ya contiene algunas de las bases del Universo Hainish, como la existencia de múltiples razas humanas descendientes de colonizadores del Planeta Hain, además que introduce el “ansible”, un medio que permite la comunicación instantánea entre los planetas que conforman la Liga de los Mundos.

Planet of Exile (1966), describe la precaria existencia de una colonia de humanos del planeta Tierra, conviviendo con los humanos de Werel, el tercer planeta de un sistema solar distante. En City of Illusions (1967), ambientada en el futuro en una Tierra escasamente poblada que ha perdido el contacto con todos los demás planetas y está gobernada por los misteriosos Shing, se explica buena parte de la historia Universo Hainish. Está protagonizada por un descendiente de los personajes de "*Planet of Exile*".

The Left Hand of Darkness (1969) fue la novela que popularizó a Ursula K. Le Guin y con la que ganó por primera vez los premios Nebula (en 1969) y Hugo (1970). Se desarrolla en el gélido planeta Gethen, habitado por una raza de seres humanos andróginos, sin sexo definido. Es el ejemplo más famoso de la androginia en ciencia ficción. Un tema principal de la novela es el efecto del sexo y el género en la cultura y la sociedad.

Cronológicamente, The Dispossessed (1974) sería la primera historia del Ciclo, pues aquí se narra el desarrollo de la física que dará lugar a la invención del "ansible", en los planetas Urras y Anarres. Esta novela ganó el Premio Nébulas (1974), el Hugo y el Locus (1975), el Premio Gigamesh (1984) y el Premio Prometheus (1993).

Las historias cortas incluidas en este volumen son: "*Winter's King*", que se desarrolla en Gethen, el planeta de los humanos andróginos (de hecho, el libro contiene dos versiones de este cuento; la más antigua fue escrita antes de "*The Left Hand of Darkness*" y emplea un lenguaje predominantemente masculino. En la versión posterior se modifica el empleo de los pronombres y se cambiaron varias frases para hacerlas neutras desde el punto de vista del género); "*Vaster Than Empires and More Slow*" es una exploración a un planeta fuera del Universo Hainish, que me recordó mucho a Solaris, la estremecedora novela de Stanisław LEM ; "*The Day Before the Revolution*" es una especie de precuela a "*The Dispossessed*", y nos lleva de regreso a Urras, a conocer a Odo, la legendaria mujer que dirigió la revolución anarquista que crearía a la sociedad del planeta Anarres descrita en "Los Desposeídos". El último cuento, "*Coming of Age in Karhide*" relata con detalle el despertar sexual de las personas de Gethen, que representa la llegada a la mayoría de edad en esa sociedad.
