

# Introduction to Science Fiction

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 12–1 p.m. or by appointment

October 30, 2023. Le Guin (4).

## review

- ▶ Pulefen Farm: dehumanization as a negative image of
  - ▶ individuality
  - ▶ sexuality
  - ▶ agency
- ▶ what is the left hand of darkness?
  - ▶ Le Guin and the Dao, the end and the way
  - ▶ overcoming duality, recuperating agency

# calendrology

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## prefatology

I talk about the gods; I am an atheist. But I am an artist too, and therefore a liar. Distrust everything I say. I am telling the truth. (xxi)

The novelist says in words what cannot be said in words. (xxii)

If I could have said it non-metaphorically, I would not have written all these words, this novel; and Genly Ai would never have sat down at my desk and used up my ink and typewriter ribbon in informing me, and you, rather solemnly, that truth is a matter of the imagination. (xxiii)

# Jamesonology

“World-Reduction in Le Guin: The Emergence of Utopian Narrative,”  
*Science Fiction Studies* 2, no. 3, special issue on “The Science Fiction of  
Ursula K. Le Guin” (November 1975): 221–30, [JSTOR](#).

- ▶ What does Jameson argue about *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and how?

## motive, argument

Such structural discontinuities...raise the question of the novel's ultimate unity. (267)

Once we grasp the nature of this technique [world reduction], its effects in the other thematic areas of the novel become inescapable. (271)



evidence

- ▶ What are Jameson's examples of "world reduction" in *Left Hand*?

## method

I would suggest, however, that beneath this official theme of warfare, there are details scattered here and there throughout the novel which suggest the presence of some more fundamental attempt to reimagine history. (276)

Karhide, projected as a social order without development, begins to develop with the onset of the narrative itself. This is, it seems to me, the ultimate meaning of that motif of right and wrong questions... (279)

- ▶ What is the “real alternative to this dilemma” [of the Mishnory road]?

We live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable—but then, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art.

Ursula K. Le Guin, “Speech in Acceptance of the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters,” November 19, 2014, [ursulakleguin.com/nbf-medal](http://ursulakleguin.com/nbf-medal).

- ▶ Do they, in the novel?

to serve man

“He loved his country very dearly, sir, but he did not serve it, or oyu. He served the master I serve.”

“The Ekumen?” said Argaven, startled.

“No, Mankind.” (315)

## recognition

“Good night, Ai,” said the alien, and the other alien said, “Good night, Harth.” (229)

And I saw then again, and for good, what I had always been afraid to see, and had pretended not to see in him: that he was a woman as well as a man. Any need to explain the sources of that fear vanished with the fear; what I was left with was, at last, acceptance of him as he was. (266)

“Arek! is that you?”

“No: *Genly Ai: I am bespeaking you.*” (273)

To her [Lang Heo Hew's] eyes we were all aliens... “Oh, Genly,” she said, “I didn't know you!” (318)

Mindspeech was the only thing I had to give Estraven, out of all my civilization, my alien reality in which he was so profoundly interested. I could talk and describe endlessly; but that was all I had to give. Indeed it may be the only important thing we have to give to Winter. (265)

“To King Argaven of Karhide on Gethen, greetings. I do not know what makes a man a traitor. No man consider himself a traitor: this makes it hard to find out. Respectfully, Spimolle G.F., for the Stabiles, in Saire on Hain, 93/1491/45.” (41)

## bonus round

- ▶ What does chapter 2 have to do with the rest of the novel?



next: let's get frelky

- ▶ Delany, “Aye, and Gomorrah...” in *Wesleyan Anthology*
- ▶ Delany, “About 5,750 Words”