



The Wave in the Mind: Talks & Essays on the Writer, the Reader & the Imagination

Ursula K. Le Guin

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Join Ursula K. Le Guin as she explores a broad array of subjects, ranging from Tolstoy, Twain, and Tolkien to women's shoes, beauty, and family life. With her customary wit, intelligence, and literary craftsmanship, she offers a diverse and highly engaging set of readings. *The Wave in the Mind* includes some of Le Guin's finest literary criticism, rare autobiographical writings, performance art pieces, and, most centrally, her reflections on the arts of writing and reading.

The Wave in the Mind: Talks & Essays on the Writer, the Reader & the Imagination Details

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Sarah says

I started a read-all-the-Le Guin-I've-never-read kick a couple of months ago in order to feel good about my presence on a The Works of Le Guin panel at Worldcon. The panel is over. I'm still reading.

This book is less focused than the magnificent *Steering the Craft*. There are pieces on writing, but also speeches and notes and random essays donated to various projects. They're all worth a read. Le Guin's thoughts on aging and being a woman and being a human and being an island are as prescient and humorous and insightful on her thoughts on being a writer. This woman is a national treasure.

selcuk says

Ursula K. Le Guin'in yahn?zca Mülksüzler kitab?n? okumu? ve onun hakk?nda kulaktan dolma birkaç ?ey d??nda pek bilgisi olmayan biri olarak Zihinde Bir Dalga'y? okumaya ba?lad?m. Kitab? bitirdi?im ?u s?ralar ise kendisine duydu?um hayranl?k ve sayg?yla dopdoluyum.

Zihnimde dalgalar yaratan, ufkumu açan, yeni dü?ünceler katan ve beni yeni okumalara yönlendiren bir kitap oldu. Okur olan yazar olan ya da okuryazarl??n merkezinde yer alan siz sevgili arkadaşlara bu kitab? tavsiye ederim..

Eleazar Herrera says

Para mí Contar es escuchar ha sido como si una voz familiar y lejana te contara cosas que ya sentías pero que no sabías explicar, que no sabías expresar en palabras, al mismo tiempo que te pone la mano en el hombro como diciendo: "¡No estás sola! A mí también se me da mejor pensar escribiendo y no hablando, a mí también me surgieron todas estas preguntas sobre lo que hago". Un libro para toda la vida. Gracias por toda la sabiduría, Maestra. <3

Marck Rimorin says

Five essays stand out:

"Being Taken for Granite"
"Things Not Actually Present"
"Rhythmic Pattern in Lord of the Rings"
"Fact and/or/plus Fiction"
"Unquestioned Assumptions"

This is a REALLY important book to read. :)

Racheal says

One of the best books I've ever read- well, in general, but particularly related to books, reading, writing, etc. I spent so much time with this, just thinking, thinking, thinking.

Note:

I LOVE URSULA K LE GUIN WITH THE FIRE OF A THOUSAND SUNS.

Ahem. So. On to my favorite things about this book:

- UKLG's quietly sure-footed feminism throughout
- Her intolerance of ego, particularly ego of the white male ivy league variety
- Her refusal to accept that there is a right way to read, to think, to express, as long as it's done thoughtfully and independently.
- Her abhorrence of unquestioned, unexamined assumptions.
- Her irreverent sense of humor ("I shall now go out on a limb, hunch my shoulders, clack my beak, stare fiercely, and announce that I think...")
- Her ability to make me think about things in a totally new way.
- Just literally everything

Claire says

Although I'm not usually drawn to collections of essays, I couldn't pass up this one by Le Guin; she has been a favorite of mine ever since I first read the Earthsea books in middle school. Her writing here (as always) is beautiful, never tedious. All the essays were arresting in one way or another; some were deeply inspiring. Her discussions of her own writing process were fascinating. As a whole, this book helped reinforce my respect for Le Guin as an artist and a master of her craft. It left me excited to read more of her fiction.

Elsa Lacruz says

No tengo palabras para describir lo que me ha gustado este libro. Es como abrir una pequeña puerta a la mente de Ursula y que te deje ver algunos de sus pensamientos.

Imprescindible para escritores, desde luego, pero también para cualquier lector, que empezará a ver las obras con otros ojos.

Este voy a tener que releerlo.

Diane Barnes says

One of my bedtime reads, mostly very good. A few of the essays were a little boring because a little too technical on the hows and whys of writing.

Joan says

Ursula LeGuin strikes me as the kind of woman it would be fascinating to have a chance to chat with. Her writing here is personal, personable, at times witty, and always wise.

Darkor Faraday says

Esta es una traducción del libro de ensayos *The Wave in the mind*, publicado en 2004. La mayoría de ensayos se corresponden al periodo de los años 90. Algunos escritos están desarrollados a partir de notas más antiguas, o rescatados de charlas. Hay cuatro grandes bloques dentro del libro: cuestiones personales, lecturas, discusiones y opiniones y sobre la escritura.

El primer bloque es un poco más intimista y personal, donde Le Guin habla sobre su infancia y su vida en general, además de reflexiones personales sobre su forma de pensar y actuar. Permite ver un poco a la mujer que intuías detrás de sus novelas y relatos. Hay algunas cosas de su forma de pensar que no me gustan, pero como ella misma dice, es una mujer criada en los años 40, algo se le tuvo que quedar. Quizá el relato más significativo aquí sea *Mis bibliotecas*, donde mantiene que el acceso a las bibliotecas debe de ser libre y gratuito, ya que es una de las formas de hacernos libres, a través de la palabra.

El segundo bloque lo dedica a las lecturas que le gustan y que le han marcado. También analiza como lingüista y escritora *El señor de los Anillos* y su ritmo, tema sobre el que trata mucho a lo largo de los ensayos. Le Guin consideraba que un texto era bueno cuando tenía un ritmo y una cadencia, lo que me permite entender mejor el porqué su prosa es tan poética. También que sus relatos sean pausados.

Aquí está el ensayo que más me ha llegado y emocionado, *Fuera de la página: vacas a viva voz. Una charla y un poema sobre la lectura en voz alta*, sobre todo por el poema final, que no sé si este discurso estará recogido en algún lugar, en audio aunque sea, porque debió de ser espectacular presenciarlo.

El tercer bloque son diversas opiniones sobre varios temas, incluido un análisis sobre el reparto por género en los premios de género. En algunos textos no estoy totalmente de acuerdo con ella, pero todos y cada uno de los ensayos está firmemente defendido. Muchas veces por una mujer enfadada, que es lo que era Le Guin en el fondo.

El cuarto y último bloque son reflexiones y “consejos” sobre escritura, que me han resultado un poco más indiferentes, ya que no estoy acostumbrada a escribir ficción, pero aún así indudablemente útiles y maravillosos, y dignos de leerse, aunque no tengas relación con el tema.

El libro merece mucho la pena, tanto por conocer más a Le Guin, como para ver sus puntos de vista, defendidos y comentados por una mujer enfadada y sobre la que nadie tenía ningún control. Esto la permitió cargar y criticar contra aquello que le enfadaba. Recomiendo mucho leerlo, sobre todo aquellas personas fans de su obra.

Marina Fonseca says

Every time I read something by LeGuin, I wish I could just sit down with her, drink some tea, and talk story. She blows my mind.

Madeleine Lycka says

Can I say that I've been waiting for this book my whole life? I've admired LeGuin as a SciFi writer for many years, but this book has shown me a whole other side of her -- a deep intellect, knowledgeable in a broad range of subjects, a voracious reader, and thoughtful critic, who is concerned with equality and feminism (and too many other subjects to mention here). She is at heart a writer, and it's wonderful to see her intellect focused on the beauty and power of fiction, and what it means (and feels like) to be a writer.

I've thought about a few of these subjects over years of my life, but to see them written down, expressed with such precision in short essay form is truly inspiring. I want to meet her and thank her personally for writing such a wonderful book.

Beatriz Aguilar Gallo says

Todos los ensayos de este libro son joyitas. Muchos son para releerlos sin descanso.

Garnette says

Recently I've been working on a novel, wrote like the wind for two weeks. Then it stopped. Busy-ness interfered. This morning, to break the block, I lay on the couch at nine a.m. something I do not allow myself to do on a bright spring workday full of energy and ideas. Determined to do nothing unless the novel resurrect. What made me stop the flow? Some slight or silent criticism perhaps, the Easter Retreat, worry about money, wrinkles, the cat. Doesn't matter – to an author any excuse will do in the moment – and I said I was fine with letting the new novel grow on its own. Maybe it's not a real idea, or a good story, or too close to 'fact', or a million other rationalizations.

But I know, after so long practicing the craft, that I can break this inertia by reading another writer on writing. And I have renewed this book too many times, let fines build up, just couldn't be finished with it. Finally I realized I did not want to finish it. I wanted always to be reading it. Always seeing it as it journeyed around my home from bed to table to kitchen to laptop case to guest room to coffee table again. I wanted this book to be mine. But, yet, the library far distant from which my library had obtained it, was determined to have it back. So yesterday I made the commitment to return it. And break the block – as I knew it would. Having this book to complete reading is like having a writer's insurance policy that pays off with more words.

For starters, Virginia Woolf in 1926 in response to Vita Sackville-West letter:

As for the *mot juste*, you are quite wrong. (Already amazing, to say quite baldly to a lover, you are quite wrong, what courage!) Style is a very simple matter: it is all rhythm. Once you get that, you can't use the

wrong words. (Awed) But on the other hand here am I sitting after half the morning, crammed with ideas, and visions, and so on, and can't dislodge them, for lack of the right rhythm. **Now this is very profound**, (n.b), what rhythm is, and goes far deeper than words. A sight, an emotion, creates this wave in the mind, long before it makes words to fit it; and in writing – such is my present belief – one has to recapture this, and set this working - which has nothing to apparently do with the words – and then as it breaks and tumbles in the mind, it makes words to fit it. But no doubt I shall think differently next year. (Parenthesis and bold are mine, not VW's)

Ursula, pardon me I have to call her that, begins and ends her book with this quote. In the beginning I wasn't sure I caught what Virginia really meant. Something about inspiration and the ocean possibly, yet more. By the end of book, I saw more clearly what they are both talking about, that writing that's real comes from the profound place inside which carries the words across the sea of self, makes a big splash as the consciousness gets it, big enough to notice and wipe the drops onto paper. Playing by the sea, writing is bare feet with sand socks, maybe a pail and shovel, a sunhat if you are lucky to keep from being burned as the relentless motion brings the story forth. OK, I really did write that trying not to edit and adultize the feeling, just write. Just connect the poet said.

Whatever I understood that phrase to mean, while understanding it in the moment, also allowed my characters whom I have already grown fond of and missed hearing from, to break through my excuses. Here I am writing again, in a review, but at the same time, Sam, Dan, Alyce (working names) are pitching their book to me. I am making notes from them right along side the Ursula notes – since I have to return the book today.

Here are samples of key Ursula ideas that helped me get back on my novel's tracks:

Page 234: Writing is a high wire act on cobwebs. Trust your own sense of balance.

Page 253: (I'm going to photocopy this whole passage to keep). The Papa's (Hemingway and Freud) agree that writers write for money and women. Ursula says: writers don't write FOR anything. Then she discusses the importance Hemingway attributed to 'experience.' I remember being eighteen, wanting to be a writer someday, lamenting to my girlfriends, who rolled their eyes at me, but how do I get that kind of experience in Bethesda?

Then on Page 273, Ursula explodes the Papas with "Aspiring writers keep telling me they'll start writing when they've gathered enough experience. Usually I keep my mouth shut, but sometimes I can't control myself and ask them, ah, like Jane Austen? Like the Bronte sisters? Those women with their wild, mad lives cram full of gut-wrenching adventure working as stevedores in the Congo and shooting up drugs in Rio and hunting lions on Kilimanjaro and having sex in SoHo and all that stuff that writers have to do – well, that some writers have to do?" Are we talking males here, of course, I answer myself. Ursula then concedes that writers need context of living in order to deepen their awareness. But what we really need, as Sinclair Lewis declared is "to apply seat to chair and get to work."

Page 261: The Question I Get Asked Most Often chapter: How do you get your ideas? Ursula answers: "I like what Willie Nelson says: the air is full of tunes, I just reach up and pick one."

Page 276: "In my *Earthsea* books, particularly the first one, people sail around all the time on the sea in small boats. They do it quite convincingly, and many people understandably assume that I spent years sailing around on the sea in small boats.

“My entire experience with sailboats was in my junior semester in Berkeley High School, when they let us take Sailing for gym credit. On a windy day in the Berkeley Marina, my friend Jean and I managed to overturn and sink a nine-foot catboat in three feet of water. We sang “Nearer My God to Thee” as she went down, and then waded a half mile back to the boathouse. The boatman was incredulous. ‘You sank it? He said, How?’

Her point: do your research. Take your experience and expand through research of others, ask questions etc. What is my novel about? Well, the navigating the sea and boat building partially of which I have only web experience.

So Ursula Le Guin changed my mind. I arose full of wind, ready to resume the novel. But first I wish to honor the great writer willing to pass on her wisdom: remember fiction is basically a lie made into a story.

Now grab the skeins of your experience add with others’ knowledge and weave into whole cloth. May yours become cloth-of-gold.

I’m feeling so good about writing I do not care if the metaphors are mixed!

Sinem says

biraz Ursula han?m?n kendi kendine konu?malar?na kulak misafiri oldum, biraz da bir yazar bir yaz?y? nas?l yarat?r onu ö?rendim. yazarlarla sohbet etmeyi seviyorsan?z mutlaka okuyun derim.

Rita says

Aunque no todos los ensayos me han cautivado y alguno se me ha hecho pesado, es una obra que merece la pena. Hay ensayos dignos de subrayar y leer y volver a leer.

Ignacio says

Es un poco frustrante que hayamos tenido que esperar hasta 2018 para acceder a uno de los libros de ensayos de Ursula K. Le Guin. Entrar en contacto con su forma de ver la literatura y varios aspectos de su vida directamente sin necesidad de tener que ponerse a elucubrar a partir de su ficción. Y puede merecer la pena. Aunque Contar es escuchar es un poco popurrí, una heterogénea recopilación de textos de los últimos 30 años donde tanto caben recuerdos de la labor como antropólogos de sus padres, notas sobre escritores para alabar detalles muy concretos de sus obras (Cordwainer Smith, Tolkien), encargos diversos (un texto sobre una isla, la fantástica presentación de la antología de Ocampo, Borges y Bioy Casares...), prevalece su apreciación sobre el acto de crear y cómo lo cultivó. Los ensayos sobre su conflicto con la no-ficción, la percepción de la belleza, el funcionamiento y el poder de la comunicación oral o el compendio final sobre cómo concibe la escritura me han parecido, dentro de su inevitable subjetividad, magníficos. Una puerta abierta a una escritora irrepetible con una visión genuina de la literatura.

Eduardo Norte says

Una joya de principio a fin, no hay más que hablar. Pocos libros me han hecho pensar tanto a la vez que me emocionaban y me entretenían. Para leer, releer y disfrutar.

NJ says

Thoughtful, profound and inspiring. I found Le Guin's voice to be refreshing, present and ever so relevant in today's society for authors and readers alike. Topics explored include (but not limited to): imagination, life, society, oppression, feminism, reading and writing. Le Guin's progressive and well thought-out perspectives and critiques are insightful, honest, delightful and empowering to read. Highly recommended for those who is after an interesting, inspiring and provocative read.

Rick says

One of the best books about writing I have ever read.

Essential reading for all writers: "The Operating Instructions", "'A War Without End'", "Telling is Listening", "Unquestioned Assumptions", "A Matter of Trust", "The Question I Get Asked Most Often", and "The Writer and the Character".

Other essays which are particularly fascinating/illuminating: "My Libraries", "Rhythmic Pattern in *The Lord of the Rings*", "On the Frontier", "Off the Page: Loud Cows—A Talk and a Poem about Reading Aloud", "Fact and/or/plus Fiction", "Collectors, Rhymesters, and Drummers", and "Things Not Actually Present—On *The Book of Fantasy* and J.L. Borges".
