



# The Wind's Twelve Quarters

*Ursula K. Le Guin*

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## **The Wind's Twelve Quarters** Ursula K. Le Guin

Wizardry, transforming its master into a cloud of fine mist...cloning, duplicating the ideal man ten times over...Utopia, in a city where almost everyone is perfectly happy...

Ursula Le Guin, author of *The Earthsea Trilogy*, has a special way of blending stirring adventure with fantasy that has made comparison with such masters as C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien inevitable.

Now, in *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, seventeen of her favorite stories reaffirm Ursula Le Guin as one of America's outstanding writers.

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## **The Wind's Twelve Quarters Details**

Date : Published October 1976 by Bantam (first published 1975)

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Author : Ursula K. Le Guin

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# From Reader Review The Wind's Twelve Quarters for online ebook

## Javier Maldonado says

Un imprescindible de Le Guin, bueno, como prácticamente todo lo que ella escribe.

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## CA says

compilación de 15 historias creo, unas me gustaron bastante otras no tanto, pero como alguien que siempre quizo leer algo de la autora pero estaba demasiado intimidada para hacerlo agradezco que exista esta libro.

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## plavizec says

Amazed...

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## Werner says

The 17 stories collected here all appeared (in a couple of cases, under different titles) in various magazines, mostly geared to SF or speculative fiction, from 1960 to 1974. So chronologically, they directly precede those in the later collection *The Compass Rose* (which I reviewed last week), and if memory serves, I also read this book first. It's a similar mix of genres, but overall, I considered the quality of most the selections here somewhat superior to that of the other book. It also has proportionately less surrealism and New Wave influence, or at least that was the impression that it left me with. (Again, several of the stories didn't leave a lasting impression on my memories.) The order is, as the author says, "roughly" chronological.

Some of the stories here have also been included in other books, and been discussed already in my reviews of those anthologies. My favorite story here, "Semley's Necklace" appears in *The Oxford Book of Science Fiction Stories*; and "Nine Lives" (which, as the author notes, comes as close as she ever does to "hard" SF) is in *Science Fiction: The Science Fiction Research Association Anthology*. I'd actually read "The Rule of Names," a fantasy tale set in the author's invented world of Earthsea (but otherwise distinct from her *A Wizard of Earthsea*) in *A Treasury of Fantasy: Heroic Adventures in Imaginary Lands* before I encountered it here. All three of these are excellent, and among Le Guin's best works, IMO.

According to the author's Preface, the latter story, along with "the Word of Unbinding," were the genesis of what later became the Earthsea trilogy, while "Semley's Necklace" provided the inspiration for her novel *Rocannon's World* (which I have not read). "Winter's King," set on the planet Gethen (a.k.a. Winter) similarly gave the impetus to *The Left Hand of Darkness* --although in her original conception, the inhabitants of that planet weren't ambisexual; she went back and edited the original story for its publication here. To my mind, the relationship is less successful here than it is with the other three stories; this one comes across as something of a *Left Hand of Darkness* out-take, even though it isn't. (Perhaps this is because I don't find Gethen as interesting a world as the other two, and find the characters harder to relate to; they come across to me as message-driven stick figures created to make a point.) On the other hand, "The Day

Before the Revolution" (dedicated to anarchist philosopher Paul Goodman) is set on the same world as Le Guin's pro-anarchy novel *The Dispossessed*, but was written after it and presupposes it. It would probably appeal most to those who read the book (which I haven't), and who liked and agreed with it. Contrary to the claim Le Guin makes here (in the introductory note to the story), *The Dispossessed* was NOT the first novel to provide an embodied description of an anarchist society; William Morris did it in *News from Nowhere*, published in 1890.

A couple of other stories deserving special mention are "April in Paris," which is a rather whimsical time-travel story (the basis for the time travel is dubious, but the story succeeds because the characters are so likable and the tone and story arc upbeat) and "The Stars Below." The Preface states that only stories that are fantasy or science fiction are included; but the latter story actually reads like historical fiction, with an indeterminate 16th or 17th-century setting, and I'm still inclined to consider it as such.) Finally, the penultimate selection, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas," is a strange story, or more of a parable, with no obvious direct analogues in the real world (Le Guin ascribed the inspiration to a hypothetical reference in one of the writings of William James), and impossible to describe or analyze without a spoiler.

The author provides introductory notes for all of the stories here (a feature the later collection doesn't have). These aren't always illuminating (they may even be the opposite), and sometimes strain to be "cute," but they also often have worthwhile insights and interesting factoids. Her collection title comes from some lines of poetry in A. E. Housman's *A Shropshire Lad*, which serves as an epigraph.

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## Tristan says

*The Wind's Twelve Quarters* is a wonderful example of Le Guin's early work in short fiction. This is the first Le Guin I've read besides *Catwings* so it was exciting to try her "serious" science fiction and fantasy and I was not disappointed by the collection. Her style is engaging and effective and her plots are well-crafted and tied closely to her themes. Since the collection is a near-chronological summary of the first ten years of her career in science fiction and fantasy, it is really exciting to see elements of subtle stylistic and thematic shift between the beginning and end of the book. I also loved the notes to each story, where Le Guin described something of her creative process and her opinions on the themes and history of each piece.

My favorite stories were

"April in Paris": a very early story about magic and place and loneliness.

"The Masters": about inquiry and rebellion. Perhaps it buys into the myth of the solitary genius a little too much, but I'm not sure.

"Darkness Box": a fun and clever story:

His bright, shadowless, windowless room was decorated on every wall with patters of gold inset with topazes, opals, crystals, and, most vivide of all jewels, candle flames moveless on golden sconces . . . he turned and saw the box, lying on the floor, open. As he stood looking at it with the same cold, absent look, a little blackness like smoke gathered about it on the floor. He stooped and picked it up, and darkness ran out over his hands. (ellipsis mine)

"The Rule of Names": a neat story in the Earthsea world about the power of knowing a name.

"Things": an elegant tale of hope and desperation and resolve.

"The Stars Below": another story about science, repression, hope, isolation, and reflexivity.

"The Field of Vision": madness and Evangelical Christian Space Pantheism. "Reality, of course. I have been reprogrammed to percieve reality, to see the truth. I see God."

"Direction of the Road": Brilliant story about the way a tree might perceive its relative position. A little funny and with a powerful bitter finish.

"The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas": My very favorite story in the collection. (view spoiler)

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## Sub\_zero says

3.5/5

Después de lo mucho que me gustó *Mundos de exilio e ilusión*, el volumen de tres novelas cortas que la colección Literatura Fantástica de RBA publicó al inicio de su andadura, tenía bastante expectativas depositadas en la lectura de este libro. *Las doce moradas del viento* es un compendio de diecisiete relatos reunidos en orden cronológico y prologados por Rosa Montero que ofrecen una amplia perspectiva de los fascinantes universos creados por la autora a lo largo de su extensa carrera. Cada uno de ellos viene acompañado por una breve introducción donde la propia Ursula K. Le Guin explica sus influencias, el origen de sus ideas o incluso el germen de lo que más tarde se convertiría en todo un ciclo de novelas impregnadas con su inconfundible sello. Ahora bien, lo que vienen siendo las historias en sí, me han dejado con un sabor un tanto agri dulce. No sé si es por la disposición de los relatos, por su naturaleza altamente heterogénea o, como ya digo antes, por las altas expectativas con que afrontaba su lectura, pero *Las doce moradas del viento* me ha tenido deambulando constantemente entre una maravillosa sensación de efervescencia narrativa y un aburrimiento soporífero. Mi problema con Le Guin es que a veces la encuentro brillante y a veces pretenciosa y barroca, sobre todo cuando se mueve por los terrenos de la ciencia-ficción antropológica (con sus ya manidas cuestiones de género) y esa tendencia que tiene a reivindicar la conservación de la naturaleza cual pasionaria en plena procesión. Con ella, sencillamente, no existe el término medio. Aun así, la valoración final del libro es principalmente positiva y lo recomiendo para todos aquellos que quieran familiarizarse con la obra de Le Guin antes de pasar a mayores.

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## Beatriz says

### ***Reto #27 PopSugar 2018: Un libro ambientado en otro planeta***

A pesar de que Ursula K. Le Guin es una de mis escritoras favoritas de ciencia ficción, los cuentos de esta antología me han dejado más bien fría e imagino que por eso es que he tardado tanto en terminarla.

Creo que se debe a que al ser relatos tan cortos (17 en total para 340 páginas), Le Guin no alcanza a desplegar esa visión sociológica y antropológica que materializa en culturas extraterrestres y que permite reflexionar, a su vez, sobre nuestra propia sociedad. Eso es lo que tanto me gusta de sus novelas.

En general, cada uno de estos relatos se centra en algún hecho, acción o consecuencia muy puntual que, en algunos casos, para la fecha en que fueron escritos pudo haber sido muy impactante o sorprendente, pero que en la actualidad no asombran mucho. (view spoiler)

Por lo anterior, no recomiendo este libro a aquellos que estén buscando a la autora reflexiva, que desarrolla personajes profundamente humanos, a pesar que hayan nacido en otro planeta y, en aquellos relatos que lo logra, es el argumento el que no alcanza a arrancar o se cierra abruptamente. Por otra parte, como la mayoría de los cuentos está asociado de alguna u otra manera a sus novelas, quizá mi experiencia hubiera sido diferente de haberlas leído antes.

Obviamente están las excepciones y de esta antología destaco especialmente los relatos *Nueve vidas*, *Más vasto que los Imperios y más lento* y *El campo de visión*. Por otra parte, me conmovió mucho el cuento *Cosas* y, a pesar de ser más fantasía que ciencia ficción y para un público más juvenil, me sorprendió mucho *El poder de los nombres*.

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### **Jr Bacdayan says**

Short stories 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas' and 'The Day Before the Revolution' elevate this collection of what is already an impeccable achievement of intelligent imagination, to a work of immense wisdom.

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### **Amanda says**

I enjoyed this overall and quite liked a number of the stories. I didn't particularly like how curated this collection is by Le Guin. Each story has a small introduction from her that I found to be too influential in my reading of the stories. Eventually, I'd read the story first and go back to her comments. But it made the whole collection seem less about the stories and more about the author. I was surprised that two of my favorite stories are set in the Earthsea world, as I really didn't like *The Wizard of Earthsea*. The stories I enjoyed were: *The Word of Unbinding*, *The Rule of Names*, *Winter's King*, *Vaster than Empires and More Slow*, *The Stars Below*, *The Field of Vision* and *The Day Before the Revolution*.

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### **Michèle says**

I finished this book like you leave a welcoming country, hoping to get back some day.

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### **Peter Tillman says**

Her first collection (1975). Currently rereading ( 9/18/17). Opens with "Semley's Necklace", one of her 2 best shorts.

Very nice cover art, uncredited, probably by Pauline Ellison:  
<http://www.isfdb.org/wiki/images/0/08...>

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### **Randy says**

Le Guin's first short story collection, which includes:

*Semley's Necklace: A Story*  
*April in Paris*  
*The Masters: A Story*

Darkness Box

The Word of Unbinding - 4/5 - OK on its own as a story of a good wizard who is imprisoned by a powerful evil wizard, but most readers will find it primarily interesting as Le Guin's first story in her Earthsea world  
The Rule of Names - 5/5 - another early Earthsea story, this one with a clever sense of humor and a strong Tolkien flavor

The Winter's King

The Good Trip: A Story

Nine Lives

Things: A Story

A Trip to the Head: A Story

Vaster Than Empires and More Slow

The Stars Below

Field of Vision

Direction of the Road

The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas - 3/5 - less a story and more of a disquieting moral/philosophical conundrum

The Day Before the Revolution

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## Hazal Çamur says

Kitap için yorum yapmayacağım. Çünkü elimde daha iyisi var. Size tek bir soru soracağım ve sorunun cevabın? yine ben vereceğim.

Neden bu kitabı okumalısınız?

1. Rocannon'un Dünyasını okuduysanız, onun öncesinde geçen ve bu kitapta yer alan Semley'in Kolyesi hikayesini görmek isteyebilirsiniz.
2. Karanlık Sol Eli'ne aşık olduysanız, bu muazzam eserin temelleri olan Kralın bu kitapta okuyabilirsiniz. Sonrasında bu hikayenin nasıl Karanlık Sol Eli'ne dönüşümünü varın siz düşünün.
3. Mülksüzler'i şaheser olarak kabul ediyorsanız Omelas'ı Bırakıp Gidenler öyküsü size Mülksüzler'e giden yolun nasıl olduğunu gösterir.
4. Yine Mülksüzler ile devam edelim. Kitap boyunca adı geçen Odo'yu gözlerinizle görmek isterseniz Devrimden Önceki Gün öyküsü sizin için sürprizler barındırıyor.

Evet, bu kitap tanıtımında da söylendiği gibi Le Guin'in ustalık öncesi öykülerinden oluşuyor. İşte o öykülerden daha sonra nasıl bir görkem yükseleceğini ve şaheser diyeceğimiz eserlere dönüşeceğini bu kitapta görüyoruz.

Karşımda gencecik ve usta olmaktan uzak bir Le Guin var. Alıştığımız gibi değil, çünkü henüz tanıtımın ki?ye dönüşmemiz. Biz onu hep kraliçeli?iyle tanıdık. ?imdi kökleri görme vakti.

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## Procrastinating Slytherin says

*There are stars in the earth, he thought, if one knew how to see them.*

How can one come up with worlds so diverse and so convincing, when one must unfold their story in such short space and time?

Reading Ursula K. Le Guin post mortem –for the first time, mind you- was a rather interesting and emotionally diverse experience for a variety of reasons.

I was rather skeptical at first: I am not particularly familiar with short stories (Poe's excluded) and The Wind's Twelve Quarters was entrusted to me by my wi- \*ahem\* best friend as something dearly precious. I **wanted** to love Le Guin's stories, before I read them. Inevitably, I ended up enjoying some less than the rest. I am not a huge fan of Sci-Fi –so don't go grabbing your rakes and torches. Squeak as I may every time I hear a Sonic Screwdriver's buzz or the first chords from SW's soundtrack, exploring the galaxy through books is not really my thing. Sprinkling Sci-Fi themes with things that traditionally belong in fantasy founded an environment that to me, before Le Guin, was entirely unfamiliar.

It took time to feel comfortable in her works -I believe, in fact, that it have never taken me this long to finish another story. At first, though I admired the simplicity of the prose, I felt repelled by setting an aesthetic. Once, however, I was accustomed to her worlds, I was able to see the things that in fact make her writing precious. The recurring themes, the existential dilemmas, the psychological detail of her characters as well as a somewhat "meta" approach in her work propose a challenge –an invitation, not only to her fellow (aspiring) writers, but also to every reader as a Human.

Nine Lives, The Stars Bellow, Direction of the Road, The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas, The Day Before the Revolution –those where the ones I enjoyed the most. I would, though, suggest to the interested reader not to skip or change the intended arrangement of her work. Thus was the author's intention –every short story is accompanied by a delicious personal note- and thus one can truly appreciate her progress –skillwise and thoughtwise, alike.

The themes, the prose, the meaning brought me to tears more than once. I don't think that would have been the case, had I read the book backwards. Reading Le Guin... well, I don't think I can express it in any other way other than say that it felt as though one hops up the shoulders of a giant. You don't see a *different* world –though her worlds **are** very innovative- but rather you review the one (inside and outside) you are familiar with with a fresher pair of eyes. The psychological detail (I know I've mentioned this before) left me at awe. Her thoughts over science and despair irked me and left me sleepless. Her development as an artist scared me, but also gave me a little bit of hope. It was amazing.

The Wind's Twelve Quarters –truly, how beautiful is this poem?- is a collection of seventeen (if I am not mistaken) short stories. Though fragmental, they are complete and and the end of the day they serve what, in my opinion, every piece of art needs to encourage: feeling **thinking**, and then maybe change for the best one day –maybe be like Odo and the citizens of Omealas. Maybe, one day, walk away.

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**Rick says**

This first half of this collection includes some Le Guin's earliest stories and is a nice compilation, but lacks much of the sophistication of her later works, and longer works. Two of the stories included are kind of proto-*Earthsea* tales that do not necessarily jive with the *Earthsea* material, but they still offer fascinating glimpses at the process of world-building and storytelling. Two are also prequels to a couple of the *Hainish Cycle* novels, and are interesting on the own as vignettes of themes from that larger tapestry. My favorite though was *Nine Lives*. This one really felt like Le Guin gave herself enough room to flesh out the material; although I must admit I became so interested in the characters that I would love to read more about them.

The second half offers some more early stories and illustrate why Le Guin is one of the greeters American writers. While these are not all masterpieces, there are several that are brilliant narratives. *The Day Before the Revolution* and *Vaster than Empires But More Slow* are both tales from the *Hainish Cycle* and are probably two of Le Guin better short stories; but *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* is possibly one of the finest examples of fiction illustrating the cost of Utopia and leaves each reader wondering if paying the price of utopia is worth the attainment. Le Guin deals with the interior spaces of science fiction: the costs to our humanity and the costs of our society. Are we worthy of what we've attained?

A slightly uneven anthology, but ends up being fairly illustrative of Le Guin's talents and capabilities.

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### **Brian says**

This collection of stories is a chronological assortment of published work during the first ten years of Le Guin in publication; it is hard to believe she wasn't published until 32, but her enormous talent makes one feel like all those years leading up to the first story were spent in a literary chrysalis. Le Guin is a master author, and whether or not sci-fi is a reader's preferred genre, her works are important enough to be read by lovers of the written word.

Many of the stories in this collection are part of the Hainish cycle, giving great background and flushing out the edges for fans of the series. "Semley's Necklace" bore the novel *Rocanon's World*, and "Winter's King" (one of the best in the collection) informs the novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*.

This is a great place to start for ULG initiates, a tremendous path through the works of one of the world's best writers.

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### **Minli says**

I've only read one other Ursula Le Guin book (*The Left Hand of Darkness*, which I loved for making me think so hard), so it was a treat to get a range of her short stories. Collections like these aren't necessarily an author's greatest hits. But after reading *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*, I feel like I know Le Guin much better and consequently, got a good insight in her creative process. I now conclude that Le Guin is an awesome, awesome lady. I would love to have a drink with her. She's just so smart and thoughtful and self-aware, and she does such a wonderful job incorporating sophisticated ideas--whether that's social theory or scientific speculation--into her writing.

Le Guin also proves that genre and great writing aren't mutually exclusive (hey, I love my genre, but it's so rare that I love a sci-fi or fantasy book as much for its writing as I do for its story or world). Her sentences

are perfect. The stories also show Le Guin's impressive range--sentient trees, aliens, winter planets, time-travel, myth or however you want to categorize Omelas--arranged roughly in chronological order. She explains that she was a Romantic at the beginning, less so at the end. I don't know if I feel a fervent attachment to any of them, but I certainly liked and admired them all. Except for Winter's King, though. I loved Winter's King so much, especially the bit about abdegnation.

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## Ernesto says

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## Daniel Kukwa says

The ultimate Ursula K Le Guin pick-and-mix; full of stories that don't really hold my interest (the medieval, Earthsea-ish stories), and the harder, weirder sci-fi stories I love (particular the Ekumen/Hainish stories). They are all beautifully written, but it definitely draws a solid line between my personal preferences.

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## Tatiana says

Unlike *Four Ways to Forgiveness*, this is an uneven collection, a mixed bag of Le Guin's early short stories.

My favorite are definitely the sci-fi stories: from Hainish cycle - *Winter's King* (a prequel to *The Left Hand of Darkness*), *The Day Before the Revolution* (a prequel to *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*), *Vaster than Empires and More Slow* (humans try to communicate with a different type of intelligence, reminiscent of *Solaris*); and independent - *Nine Lives* (about cloning) and *The Field of Vision* (explores mysterious structures on Mars).

A couple of *Earthsea* shorts are great too - *The Word of Unbinding* and *The Rule of Names*. I wasn't sure I wanted to try Le Guin's fantasy before, but now I am certain I will, her magic system is quite interesting.

The worst for me are the *psychomyth* category of stories (very much like Margo Lanagan's writing) and the acid-trippy ones. They are just weird and most of the time I didn't even understand them. The best in this bunch are - *The Masters* and *The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas*, hard to explain what they are about though...

Almost forgot, another good thing about the collection is that all stories are preceded by the author's introductions. Interesting to learn about Le Guin's creative process. She is a very smart woman.

P.S. I would really appreciate if someone could explain *Darkness Box* to me. It seems to be a favorite of many readers, but I have absolutely no idea what happened in it.

*The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas* - Hugo (short story 1973)

*The Day Before the Revolution* - Nebula (short story 1974)

