Exile, Communication and Unity in the Science Fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin

By Barton Johnston

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Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the School of Humanities and Social Science Thesis Library being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the roles of exile and communication in the science fiction of Ursula K. Le Guin. Specifically, it examines the exile’s role in the progression from isolation towards unity that has been identified across Le Guin’s oeuvre, and the need for effective communication in maintaining this unity. The argument of this thesis is that the exile’s journey is, in all cases, fundamental to the eventual attainment of unity but that in order for unity to be realised, something must be sacrificed of the individual. The exile must always, therefore, pay a price for unity above and beyond the fact of their exile.

Other critics have written, separately, on the concepts of unity, exile and communication as they appear in Le Guin’s fiction. To my knowledge, however, these concepts have never been adequately linked together. Certainly, the concept of exile has not been studied in enough detail, considering its importance to Le Guin’s overarching vision. This thesis aims to rectify this lack by presenting a cogent literary analysis that locates these three concepts within Le Guin’s work and identifies the co-dependency that emerges from their interactions.