

LeGuin word tapestries defy labels

Fantasy weaver journeys in magical, new directions

By MELODY WARD
Of the Emerald

The fantasy weaver trades thoughts with avid science fiction readers. Dangling from perches along the Forum Room stairs, they raise their hands as one when she asks how many want to be writers.

At 49, Ursula LeGuin has realized what is presently a dream for most of her audience. Published in England and the United States, the Portland-based writer holds two Hugo and Nebula awards and a national book award.

Among her works, a fantasy trilogy, *Earthsea*, is often mentioned in comparison with Tolkien's somewhat immortalized series. Critics rank her a "quality" science fiction/fantasy writer.

Debate over the distinction between fantasy and science fiction draws amusement from LeGuin. "I think we have labeled the genres and then asked ourselves what the differences between our labels are."

But LeGuin didn't start off writing for a science fiction market, and says she still doesn't try to tailor her writing for a particular genre. "I write what I write and then publishers put labels on it."

"I think that if you have a real talent you should write whatever you damn well want to write and then you should try to sell it."

The trouble with writing for a specific market is that the writer becomes "owned," she observes. "Young writers don't need to turn into hacks."

Later, she says simply, "I never said, 'I want to be a writer.' I just knew I was one. But that would have sounded rather arrogant."

Background for her stories comes from reading things she picked up because she liked them. "You take straight fantasies like the *Earthsea* books, how am I going to do research? I made it all up outa my head."

Her own reading has run toward poetry of late. "I think it's a sign of advancing age," she laughs. "The less time you have, the more you want it to be concentrated."

LeGuin says it's easy to overstate how much a writer may be influenced by other authors. "Your mind is a river. It comes from many fountains."

Almost embarrassed, she describes her self-editing process. "I start with page one and I write all the way to 256. Then I go back and rewrite it. I'm always looking backwards, forward and trying to tie the knots."

LeGuin's drafts are always produced in longhand, her peculiarity, she says.

"Writers are all peculiar. Basically, I cross out so much I don't want to go making x's. I want to go (her upraised arm cuts a jagged swath through the air) tchhhhhh."

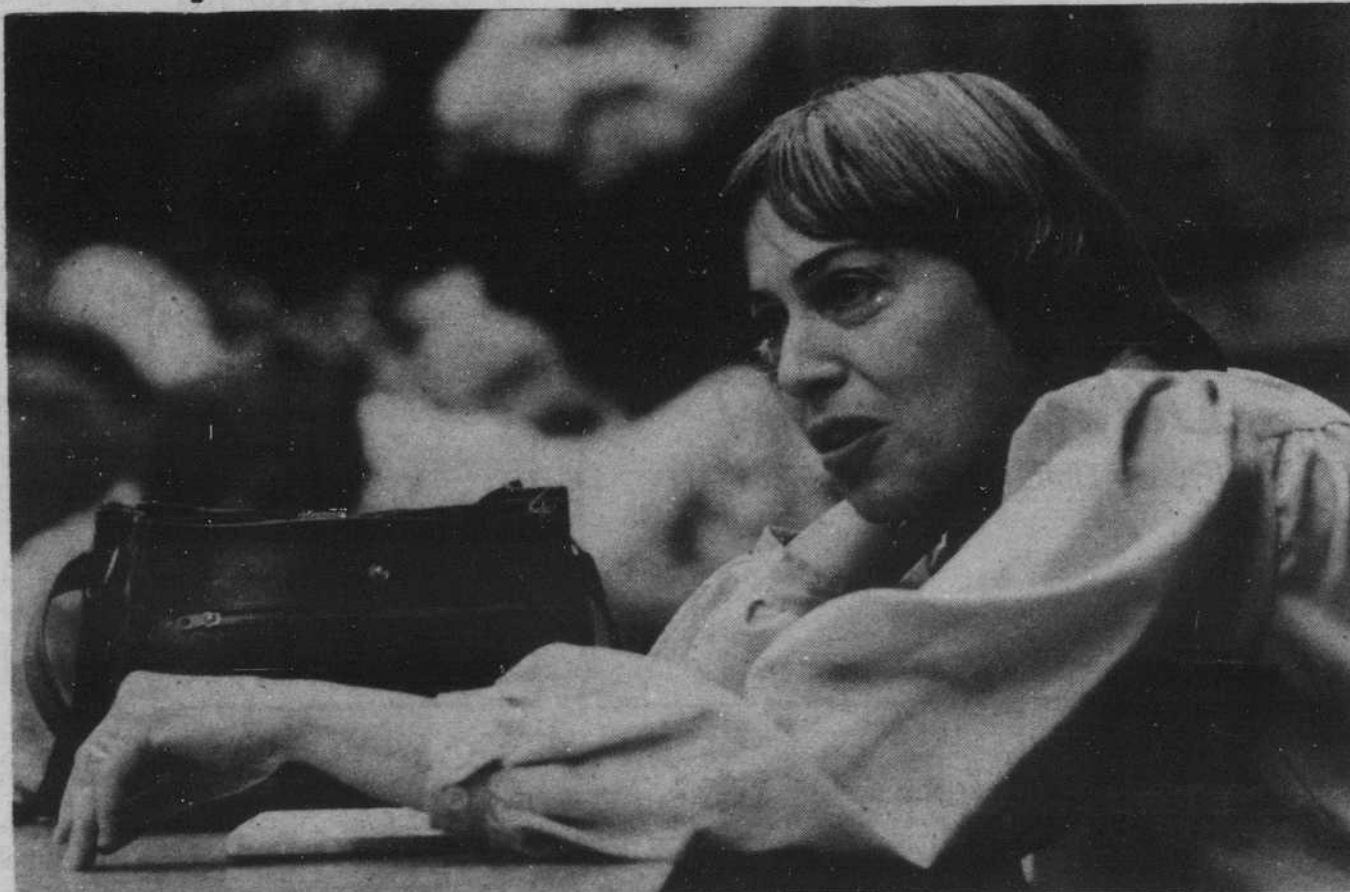


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Award winning fantasy writer Ursula LeGuin spoke of words and writers, and her works in two sessions Tues-

day. She says fantasy is "one way of making statements about the world." Related story on Page 3A.

Creating a planet, building an entire cosmology from the ecosystem out, appeals to LeGuin, though she says she gleans from sources like *Scientific American* for technical aspects. But while she usually knows the general framework for a plot from the beginning, she doesn't write from a detailed outline.

"I don't approach these things theoretically — I face the problems as they come up. I'm inside like a worm in an apple, trying to eat my way out. But I never see the apple."

LeGuin says she leaves sizing up the apple up to critics and English professors. And distilling a fantasy into the writer's "statement" isn't possible, even for her.

The book becomes a symbol, she says. "You use a symbol because it's the only way you can say it. The sneaky thing about words is, when used by artists they are just as irrational as notes or colors. You can describe some effects it has on you and that's about as far as you can get with it."

LeGuin slips bits of unfinished stories and stillborn ideas into a trunk, destroying very little because everything she's burned, she's gone looking for in vain later.

Though LeGuin is an ardent feminist, a self-tagged liberal mind, she hasn't any "magical women" as the principal characters for her works.

"I'm writing out of the world I grew up in, and I can't really get out of it," she muses. "It's very frustrating."

A recent study of fantasy authors indicates the image of magical women (usually witch figures) is changing, she says. "The sense of the magical woman as being dark is changing. Apparently there isn't so much fear of the women. A lot more women are writing fantasy than used to — it had been pretty much a male-dominated field."

"I don't seem to be doing much magic at the moment... I'd like to do something quite different."

While the *Earthsea* trilogy is often compared to Tolkien's books, LeGuin cringes gently at the notion.

"I feel humble... I feel they're making a mistake here. That is (Tolkien's) the greatest fantasy ever written. I've read it out loud three times and enjoyed every word of it."

"They start comparing — I start crawling under the table."

today

Oregon women's basketball coach Elwin Holny's "Canadian Connection" has so far brought to the University a new assistant coach and some strong players who give the team a new look and possibly a new advantage. See Page 1B.

Faculty proposals to kick the ROTC program off campus surfaced ten times during the past twelve years and have almost become an expected ritual. See Page 8A.

Local groups unite in draft opposition

By KELI OSBORN
Of the Emerald

Representatives from four Eugene groups have called for a community-wide coalition to oppose the draft and draft registration.

Members of Campus Christian Ministry, Clergy and Laity Concerned, the University Veterans Association and the National Lawyers Guild announced formation of the coalition in a press conference Tuesday morning.

Later Tuesday, University Veterans announced Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., had reiterated his opposition to the draft. In a letter to the campus organization Hatfield said he has "no desire to see conscription reinstated."

In Tuesday's conference Kurt Hoelting said he and other ministers are concerned

that current legislation in Congress could be the first step toward a reinstatement of the draft itself, if not in this session of Congress then in the near future.

"We are concerned also that the groundwork for this legislation has been laid in a deliberately covert and piecemeal manner, that it has led to public confusion and a general absence of open public debate," Hoelting said.

He noted that conscientious objection options may be limited, citing a Department of Defense study that suggests 24 hours to 10 days as the period in which individuals may challenge their classification.

Following the meeting, Hoelting said he feared that those who waited until after classification to seek C.O. status would be "too late." Rather than waiting until confronted with actual registration, individuals should begin now to examine their conscience and consider their options, he said.

CALC member Marion Barnes nodded agreement with Hoelting throughout his brief statement, and added several comments.

The draft or even draft registration is part of a foreign policy based on a posture of military threat, she said. "Its primary beneficiaries are the U.S.-based multinational corporations, not ordinary people in this country or abroad."

The best alternative to the draft — or draft registration — is not to have it, she said.

"A foreign policy which involved equitable terms of trade for the developing nations and a cut-off of funding for human rights violators would do far more than the draft to provide genuine security for the American people and for the people Third World," she added.

The coalition will hold its first meeting Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Koinonia Center, 1414 Kincaid St.