



Dancing at the Edge of the World

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Ursula K. Le Guin's *THE LANGUAGE OF THE NIGHT* (1979) is an impressive collection of essays that reveals the lively and interesting mind behind recent classics of fantasy and science fiction such as the Earthsea trilogy (1968-1972) and *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* (1969). *DANCING AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD* shows "an aging, angry woman," an increasingly self-conscious and scholarly feminist who, in her maturity, has been systematically exploring the anthropological and imaginative work of her parents, Alfred and Theodora Kroeber. In short, while this volume has many things to offer, it seems especially valuable in revealing the mind behind *ALWAYS COMING HOME* (1985), an exercise in creating culture that may be Le Guin's most impressive and beautiful work.

When Le Guin discusses utopias in "A Non-Euclidean View of California," she shows that the Kesh of *ALWAYS COMING HOME* approach her ideal of a "society predominantly concerned with preserving its existence." This ideal connects with her study of early American Indian cultures, for she believes the groups that especially interested her parents came close to living in harmony and balance with one another and their landscapes. This ideal connects with her feminism, stated most fully in the "Bryn Mawr Commencement Address," for she believes that in such a culture, women would speak about their experience in their language, asserting a balance of value between male and female work and language that Western culture, on the whole, has denied.

The pieces in this volume make clearer what any careful reader of Le Guin's recent fiction can see, that she is imagining more balanced ways of living than contemporary culture idealizes, ways that are possible if moderns will choose them.

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