

14 - 16 August 2026

Berlin , Germany

Representations of Education in Le Guin's Rocannon's World (1966)

Zoe Keating

York St John University, the United Kingdom

Abstract

This paper is an examination of how Le Guin uses her world building within her book *Rocannon's World* (1966) to reflect on and examine her real-life referents for educational systems and structures. She uses the generic conventions of both SF and High Fantasy within this text to subvert the expectations of the reader to the end of reflection and examination; she does this to mirror the expectations of education levels. Rocannon is a highly educated and experienced protagonist, he approaches his role as Envoy from this perspective which is enforced and upheld by the Ekumen as the superior position. Ruth Levitas reflects on the education of desire, suggesting that "The utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present. It creates a space in which the reader may, temporarily, experience an alternative configuration of needs, wants and satisfaction" (Levitas, 4). She suggests through this theory that education comes from the presentation of an alternative.

Le Guin reflects on the disposition to conflate knowledge and the source of that knowledge, she affirms that this source of knowledge is not vital to a person's morality but instead can be adjusted to best serve an individual's community. Education theorist Paolo Freire suggests that "the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires" (Freire, 21). He posits that education is used as a weapon to justify superiority. Le Guin spends her inaugural text undermining genre conventions, reader expectations, and the unwritten laws of the educated author.

Keywords: Science Fiction, Education, Genre, Le Guin, Paolo Freire, Ruth Levitas