Myth-Remaking in the Shadow of Vergil: The Captive(-ated) Voice of Ursula K. Le Guin’s *Lavina*

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**Abstract**

Reading of Ursula K. Le Guin’s not-exactly-historical novel *Lavínia*, which combines her thematic interest in the feminine voice and experience with postmodern and existential concerns about authorship, textuality, and the collaboration between author and reader (and author and character)—resulting, as always with Le Guin, in something rich, deep, and difficult to classify. Explores how Le Guin adapted the original sources to create a novel from the female character’s point of view.

**Recommended Citation**


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Ursula K. Le Guin (21 October 1929 – 22 January 2018) was an American writer, known mostly for her work in science fiction and fantasy. She received the Hugo Award, Nebula Award, Locus Award, and World Fantasy Award, and was made a Grandmaster of Science Fiction in 2003. If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself—as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done to nation—you may hate it, or deify it. For the writer Ursula K. Le Guin, fantasy and speculation weren’t only about invention; they were about challenging the established order. Photograph by Dana Gluckstein / MPTV Images. The first words I read by the writer Ursula K. Le Guin, who died this week, at the age of eighty-eight, were “Come home!” The plea—a mother’s to a departing child—opens Le Guin’s novel “The Tombs of Atuan.” I was twelve years old and hooked. She took her readers on journeys to speculative planets, or, in the five novels of her beloved Earthsea series, across an imaginary archipelago. But she was also a homebody. She once told me that she had a knack for home life, adding, “I never lived anywhere I really felt not at home—except Moscow, Idaho, and even it had redeeming features.” Le Guin wanted to hear the people she’d imagined; she embarked on an elaborate process with her friend Todd Barton to invoke their spirit and tradition. For More Info: http://www.freedomtospend.org/catalog/fts009. In the novel, the story of Stone Telling, a young woman of the Kesh, is woven within a larger anthropological folklore and fantasy. The ways of the Kesh were originally presented in 1985 as a five hundred plus page book accompanied with illustrations of instruments and tools, maps, a glossary of terms, recipes, poems, an alphabet (Le Guin’s conlang, so she could write non-English lyrics), and with early editions, a cassette of “field recordings” and indigenous song.