



The Tombs of Atuan

Ursula K. Le Guin , Margot Paronis (Translator)

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When young Tenar is chosen as high priestess to the ancient and nameless Powers of the Earth, everything is taken away - home, family, possessions, even her name. For she is now Arha, the Eaten One, guardian of the ominous Tombs of Atuan.

While she is learning her way through the dark labyrinth, a young wizard, Ged, comes to steal the Tombs' greatest hidden treasure, the Ring of Erreth-Akbe. But Ged also brings with him the light of magic, and together, he and Tenar escape from the darkness that has become her domain.

The Tombs of Atuan Details

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Author : Ursula K. Le Guin , Margot Paronis (Translator)

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From Reader Review *The Tombs of Atuan* for online ebook

Nikki says

Much as I love *A Wizard of Earthsea*, there isn't much feminine about it. It's a male society, it seems in that book, shaped by men and only inhabited by women. I don't know how much thought Le Guin put into that, originally, but the women in the story don't really have much of a place. There's the witch and Serret and the Kargish woman and Yarrow... but they don't have great parts in Ged's life. He's taken away from the tutelage of the witch because only a man can teach him wizardry, and there's the sayings, "Weak as women's magic" and "Wicked as women's magic". Le Guin addresses those issues later, in *Tehanu*, but women aren't really present in the first book.

So it's just nice to have a book framed by women: Tenar and Thar and Kossil and Penthe, the priestesses and novices of the Tombs. Women are the only ones allowed to serve the gods, or at least the Nameless Ones -- well, women and eunuchs. The fact that Arha/Tenar is the main character, and not Ged, gives it a whole different slant. She has a different kind of life, so her story is rather different. Her story is less of an epic quest than Ged's -- there's tension, and danger, but they're not going to something, they're escaping something. She has to grow as a person in a different way. The quest is Ged's, as before, but we see him coming in from outside this time. It's interesting.

The language and descriptions and images are all as beautiful as the first book. There's something very compelling about the Tombs, the dark rituals. You can feel the cold, the routine hardness -- you feel stuck in the rut that Arha has been stuck in throughout her many lives. You can feel the slow unchangingness of the place. And you feel the joy and weight of the escape, too. I like the rhythms and tastes of this book the best in the whole series, I think. Some of the descriptions have just stuck in my head -- the drum struck at a slow heart-pace, the little thistle growing beside Ged's hand. And some of the things Ged says, his descriptions of Havnor and his speech that is essentially about "nature red in tooth and claw".

This is really the only book that steps out of Ged's own culture. The others are mostly rooted in the Archipelagan traditions, which is interesting enough, but this provides a bit more worldbuilding. Which is awesome.

Apatt says

When I first tried reading this in my teens I could not manage to go beyond 50 pages because I wanted Ged (AKA Sparrowhawk), the hero of the previous volume *A Wizard of Earthsea*, to show up and follow him on new adventures. What I found instead was a story of an entirely new protagonist, a young girl called Tenar who lives an oppressive life on the island of Atuan. Young fool that I was, I did not read on to the middle of the book where Ged does show up for more adventures though this time as the secondary character. If I had waited I would have realized this second volume of the Earthsea trilogy is even better than the first.

Ged and Tenar. Art by Leo and Diane Dillon

The pacing of *The Tombs of Atuan* is much more staid than *A Wizard of Earthsea*, much of the first half of book is spent on fairly elaborate world building, developing the insular, claustrophobic setting of Atuan. LeGuin's skill with character development and the eloquence of her prose maintains my interest during the

slower paced early part of the book. Tenar is a fine character, intelligent, resilient and resourceful. I love how her character develops as she gradually realizes the truth about the things she has dedicated her life to serve and worship. However, for me, Ged is like the battery that powers the plot of the story. Le Guin really switches to second gear as soon as he suddenly pops up, the story gallops on from that point.

This book is much darker and more mature than *A Wizard of Earthsea*, the scenes in the pitch dark of the Labyrinth is highly evocative and a little creepy. I was reading this on a sunny afternoon and I could still feel the creeping darkness, thank God for Ged's enfeebled mage light! Even though the "big bad" Nameless Ones never really come out of the shadow to show us some dripping fangs, cyclopean eyes, tentacles and such, Le Guin still manages to make their evil quite palpable.

OK, I don't want to write a long review for such a short book, so short that I am still hankering for some more Earthsea time, so now I am busy reading the third volume *The Farthest Shore*.

Update: After finishing *The Farthest Shore* I believe this is my favorite book of the original trilogy. I just love the dark, claustrophobic atmosphere in this one. Looking at a few other reviews it seems to be a fan favorite also.

Interesting French cover.

Martyn Stanley says

When I reviewed 'The Wizard of Earthsea' I gave it four out of five:-

<https://www.goodreads.com/review/show...>

Having read 'Tombs of Atuan' I feel like I was overgenerous. Maybe *WoE* was a 3.5 rounded up?

The bottom line is, I REALLY enjoyed 'Tombs of Atuan'. When I got to the point where Ged entered the story, I could hardly put it down. It's a gripping book, set in a grim and fascinating setting. It reeks of the mystery of ancient places. The whole book takes place in the sort of setting most books brush past, hinting that the ruins are ancient and of another time and telling you nothing more.

Surprisingly, Ged was NOT the protagonist here. It never really switched to Ged's point of view either. This tale is told from the perspective of a young girl called Tenar, who becomes 'Arha' (The Swallowed One) when the old Priestess dies, because she's born on the night the old one died, she is assumed to be the reincarnation.

This situation puts Arha into a unique dichotomy. She essentially grows up in a world where she has enviable privilege, but no freedom. She's well looked after, she's important, but she can never leave the Tombs or forego the rituals demanded of her by the ancient dark that dwells there. She is essentially a well cared for slave. For the most part Arha seems to accept her fate. I can understand why too. I think it's realistic. She leads such a sheltered existence that considering what the world beyond the Tombs may be like never really occurs to her until she meets Ged. In some respects her moral anguish over the fate of the men

she left in the chained room reminds a little of my own character Vexis Zaelwarsh, Low Priestess of Avanti who features in Rise of the Archmage. I actually think this book has a very similar theme to Vexis's story in Deathsworn Arc. The exploration of faith and fear... It almost reads like a strange version of Stockholm syndrome. When offered freedom, I don't feel Arha grabs it without fear. This is probably realistic. Most of us DO have a fear of the unknown. A new job, relationship or moving to a new town always brings anxiety, even if it's something we're really excited about. Arha ends up in a position where she's forced to choose between a new life, unknown - or the existence she's lived for her whole life. The way Le Guin portrays it, Ged's kindness and compassion, always offering her the choice of sacrificing him or enslaving him to return to her life as Low Priestess - that seals the deal. The villain in this number, Kossil seems to envy Arha, but I got the impression Kossil had chosen a life serving the Tombs, whereas the life was chosen FOR Arha / Tenar without her having a say in it. This is a crucial difference and though subtle, it gives the whole book context. This book is about the importance of freedom, over privilege.

I particularly liked the rich and emotional exploration of Arha's early life in the Temple. It seemed realistic and intimate. I liked the claustrophobia and darkness of the tombs where no light is ever permitted and explorers have to feel their way in the darkness. I DO think Kossil's decision to light up the Tombs later in the book in order to validate Arha's claims really pushed Arha's loyalty towards Ged. For me, it showed a lack of respect for the gods Arha served and a prioritization of control or dominion over Arha, over revering the forces the Tombs belong to.

A truly gratifying part of the book was the ending. It would have been VERY easy to simply set the characters outside the Tomb and waffle off a little 'happily ever after' bit. Le Guin doesn't allow herself the easy way out though. She continues to explore Tenar's feelings as they make their way away and it was good. The portrayal of her emotional turmoil and sense of loss and lostness was excellent.

Another thing I found particularly satisfying was the explanation of the strangers Ged met on the reef in book 1. I hope their story isn't complete. It was great to learn more about them, but the more you learn about them - the harder hitting and sadder their tale becomes. When you dwell on their fate and the lives they must have led up until Ged met them... Their story is truly gut-wrenching.

Of all the people Ged meets on his travels and all those who inhabit the Tombs, I feel the most sympathy for the castaways on the reef. I REALLY hope Le Guin has some kind of redemption in mind for them, but I can't see how she can. Their tragic, sad lives seem to be another reminder of the realness and gritty undertone of Le Guin's story. It isn't in your face grittiness like Game of Thrones, there aren't beheadings, disembowellings, impalings and people being eaten alive and stuff... Le Guin is subtler and applies the grit brush on a more deeply emotional level.

All in all I loved this book and enjoyed it far more than the first one. My only criticism was it could have been longer. I can't mark it down on that because as much as anything it's a testament to how much I was enjoying reading this!

Paperback:- <http://amzn.to/2fPKqJ9>

Kindle:- <http://amzn.to/2wwtP0l>

Martyn Stanley

Author of:-

The Last Dragon Slayer (Free to download)

Bookdragon Sean says

The first few chapters of this were a real chore. They were confusing and dull. However, out of the darkness of those chapters, and out of the depths of the labyrinth, came a story of redemption, human suffering and a will, a will to overcome great evil when succumbing to the darkness would have been a much easier path to walk.

“You must make a choice. Either you must leave me, lock the door, go up to your alters and give me to your masters; then go to the Princess Kossil and make your peace with her-and that is the end of the story- or, you must unlock the door, and go out of it, with me. Leave the tombs, leave Atuan, and come with me oversea. And that is the beginning of the story.

It was a shame about the beginning, but the rest of the novel more than made up for it. That quote gave me tingles when I read it. Artha is a young priestess of the undying power that is shadow. She reluctantly carries out her duties of ritualistic dance, prayer and the murder of anyone who enters the darkness of the Labyrinth. She doesn't directly kill the unfortunate wonderers, but she leaves them die of exposure nonetheless when she could easily save them. There's no life in the darkness and certainly nothing to sustain it. So you're as good as dead if you enter, and even deadlier if a priestess imprisons you in a part of the catacombs.

It's all doom and gloom until a familiar face turns Artha's life around. It's odd to talk about such strong character development in a novel this short, but Artha completely changes. She gradually sees the evil of her situation, and that none of it is of her doing. She sees that she is as much a victim as any of the wonderers. The familiar face she encounters is a powerful namer, he is a wizard of both name and reputation, and he knows how to break the binding darkness; he knows how to save the young girl: he knows to remind her of her own name, her true name, and exactly who she is in the process.

Fast and eloquent writing:

“The Earth is beautiful, and bright, and kindly, but that is not all. The Earth is also terrible, and dark, and cruel. The rabbit shrieks dying in the green meadows. The mountains clench their great hands full of hidden fire. There are sharks in the sea, and there is cruelty in men's eyes.”

Le Guin doesn't piss about. She has a story and she tells it. Her narration is minimalistic and basic, but it carries with it such depth and feeling. She can achieve a lot in just a few words; the whole mood of the story shifts in just a few chapters; yet, it's appropriately done. I'm normally an advocate of drawn out plot and lengthy characterisation (points lovingly at my Robin Hobb bookshelf) but Le Guin does what she does just as well. It's odd. Le Guin can do what other novelists do in six times the word count. Her writing is fast, engaging and excellent. This is the perfect series for those that want a fantasy hit, but don't want to be dragged down with pages, and pages, of lengthy storytelling.

I also liked the shift of narrators; it added a little more flavour the Earthsea world. I think it would have been predictable, and perhaps easy, had Ged been the narrator at the start. By shifting the story around I got to see the world from the perspective of a much darker character. I liked the way this was done even if it was a little bewildering at the start.

Earthsea Cycle

1. A Wizard of Earthsea- Four worthy stars
 2. The Tombs of Atuan- **A redeeming four stars**
 3. The Farthest Shore- A strong four stars
-

Nikki says

This always used to be my favourite of the series, both for sheer atmosphere and because it featured a female-centred world, in complete contrast to the first book. It's almost the opposite, in that way: Ged isn't the POV character anymore, and instead we follow Arha/Tenar, seeing her experience in a different land, seeing Ged as an outsider. That latter is especially fun, because though he talks about not learning Ogion's lessons, it seems that he really has. And there was always an attraction for the dark rituals, Arha's dance in front of the Empty Throne, the drums struck softly at heart-pace. Le Guin didn't just blindly throw together a bunch of superstitions and fake rituals: it hangs together as a cohesive whole, and the fact that even the characters find the rituals meaningless, strange, the significances lost in time... that also works for me.

One image that always sticks with me is that of Ged asleep on the ground, the small thistle by his hand. That image somehow epitomises the book for me: his serenity and trust, his link to the world around him, and also the way Tenar sees him, truly sees him, alive and in the world and not at all a part of the dark existence she led before... it's hard to put into words, but that image does it.

Originally posted here.

Bionic Jean says

The Tombs of Atuan by the American author Ursula K. Le Guin, was originally published in 1971. It is the second book in her "*Earthsea*" series of fantasy books, which began with "*A Wizard of Earthsea*" in 1969. Yet **The Tombs of Atuan** has never achieved the same popularity as its predecessor, and is often thought a lesser novel. I read each of "*The Earthsea Trilogy*" in turn, shortly after their first publication, but could remember little about **The Tombs of Atuan** now. How glad I am that I have come to read it again, after so many decades. It is an extraordinary work; a subtle and finely nuanced masterpiece, packed with atmosphere and symbolism.

"In the great Treasury of the Tombs of Atuan, time did not pass. No light; no life; no least stir of spider in the dust or worm in the cold earth. Rock, and dark, and time not passing."

The Tombs of Atuan feels like a completion of the first book, although there were to be four more in total; three after the initial trilogy. The first two feel like two halves of the same tale, complementing, contrasting; fitting snugly together like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. In the first book we viewed Ged objectively from the outside, but in **The Tombs of Atuan** we are very aware of the protagonist Tenar's inner feelings and thoughts; thus outside and inside viewpoints form a complete picture.

The equilibrium of Earthsea itself:

“The world is in balance ... To light a candle is to cast a shadow.”

is exemplified by these two novels; they are perfectly balanced. Yin and yang. Both parts are necessary.

“*A Wizard of Earthsea*” is essentially a bildungsroman, about a young boy, Ged, who has magic powers. We follow his voyages all over the archipelago of Earthsea, and the distant lands, learning all about the many islands, cultures, languages and races. And we see Ged’s struggles both with himself, and with the forces of magic, both for good and for evil. **The Tombs of Atuan** is also a coming of age story, but in contrast, is set almost wholly in a very small area of one city, in one of the outlying islands in the Kargish empire. In addition, the protagonist is not a young boy with red-brown skin, open to ideas and keen to learn all he can, but a young girl with white skin, severely restricted in her thinking, and determined to follow a hard and cruel tradition in a closed religious sect. Both are proud and arrogant in their youth, though feeling insecure in their roles, but their experiences — their “worlds” — are far apart.

The Tombs of Atuan follows the story of Tenar, who was born on the Kargish island of Atuan. Because she had been born on the day that the high priestess of the Tombs of Atuan had died, the other priestesses believe Tenar to be her latest incarnation. They watch Tenar until she reaches the age of five, when she is taken from her family, to be trained as the high priestess to the “*Nameless Ones*”, unseen formless dark powers, at the tombs on the island.

“[the throne] was empty. Nothing sat in it but shadows”

The name “*Tenar*” is taken from her in a ceremony involving a symbolic sacrifice, and she is now called simply “*Arha*”, meaning “*the one who has been devoured*”, or the “*Eaten One*”. Arha is now consecrated to the service of the Nameless Ones and receives instruction in how to dedicate her life to them, through intricate ceremonies and duties, which she increasingly believes she is remembering from her previous many incarnations:

“All human beings were forever reborn, but only she, Arha, was reborn forever as herself.”

Because she is so young, Arha needs caring for, and a eunuch called Manan has been chosen to nurture her. The two develop an affectionate bond; nevertheless, Arha’s childhood is very lonely, as she lives apart from all the others. Her only friend is Penthe, a priestess of her own age. Arha receives instruction at the hands of Thar and Kossil, the priestesses of the two other major deities, who outwardly treat her with great respect, because of her position. Arha questions nothing, although the regime is strict, and the environment sterile and static, allowing for no growth. She tries to learn and remember her unique role as the highest ranking priestess.

Thar tells Arha of the underground passages and rooms; the labyrinth beneath the Tombs, teaching her how to find her way around them. Arha spends much of her life underground in the maze of catacombs, groping to find the way, which in the most part is a secret known only to herself; memorising the routes and passages where all light is forbidden, even to her.

“Touch was one’s whole guidance; one could not see the way but held it in one’s hands”

?“Here there was no wind, no season; it was close, it was still, it was safe.”

Thar tells Arha of (view spoiler) reminding her that there are unbelievers who can work magic:

“the Wizards of the West can raise and still the winds, and make them blow whither they will...it is said they can make light at will, and darkness; and change rock to diamonds; and lead to gold...at least in seeming”

When she becomes fourteen, Arha takes on the full responsibilities of her position, as the highest ranked priestess in the Tombs. Yet for all her apparent power, her life is stifled by meaningless rituals, and by the pettiness of older, ambitious priestesses, who are more bitter and resentful of their very limited lives, and her privileged status. One in particular, (view spoiler)in reality *“holds nothing sacred but power”*.

Arha has now become inured to the casual cruelty of the blood sacrifices, and regards it as her duty to work out the most cruel and appropriate punishments for transgressors. Nobles who defy the GodKing, are sentenced to a death which is of as much political as religious value, and are sent to the Place of the Tombs to be human sacrifices.(view spoiler)

There is no magic in the tombs of Atuan, merely a series of closely guarded rituals. The community is isolated from the rest of Earthsea, viewing any mention of magic as blasphemy, and the Hardic folk as evil sorcerers. Anyone from the inner lands in turn, views Kargish peoples as barbarians. Not only do those in the Kargad lands have a distinct culture, and language, but they do not read or use written language, considering this to be evil.

Thus the darkness of the tombs of Atuan covers far more than a simple lack of light. It is a closed, claustrophobic, deeply oppressed existence, with a rigid class system and cruel savage religion. Is is a small part of a wider society, the Kargad empire, which is depicted as militant, and patriarchal. This society neither believes in the equilibrium, which the rest of Earthsea believes in, nor has any belief in magic. It is a theocracy, with a monarch, the GodKing, who claims to represent the power of the “Nameless Ones”:

“the powers of the dark, of ruin, of madness”.

We see that Tenar, as the high priestess, rules over an order of lesser priestesses who do her bidding, but all are in service to the Nameless Ones and their GodKing. It is interesting that as early as 1971, a female author noted for Science Fiction and Fantasy, (which is unusual in itself), chose to portray a female protagonist, with a largely female set of characters. Both are against type, and much has been made of this, just as *“A Wizard of Earthsea”* is sometimes criticised for having few female characters. Interesting, yes, but perhaps only as a statistic.

Speaking for myself, I am always relieved when the writing is gender-free, as invariably I know that if I can tell that the author is female, and “has a female voice” or male, and “sees things from a man’s point of view”, it is a book I will not enjoy. I usually discover either that it has an agenda, or that it is fitting into a jaded genre. In a similar way, my personal feeling is that both these main characters Ged, and Tenar, are fairly interchangeable. Their gender is in no way what the novels are about.

The aspects of the characters which interest us are are their capacity for growth, and self-knowledge; their search for identity, how they move on from their individual difficulties — each is immensely proud initially — about the human qualities they learn to value, and about their tremendous struggles with good and evil.

Just less than half way through the book, Arha has an encounter which will challenge her entire belief

system, and her place in the world of Earthsea. The labyrinth under the Tombs is depicted as “*the very heart of darkness*” a place where light is forbidden. At the same time, it is decreed “*no man can enter the Dark Places of the Tombs*”. Arha witnesses both sacrilege and defilement, (view spoiler)

... the great vaulted cavern beneath the Tombstones, not hollowed by man's hand but by the powers of the Earth. It was jewelled with crystals and ornamented with pinnacles and filigree of white limestone where the waters under earth had worked, aeons since: immense, with glittering roof and walls, sparkling, delicate, intricate, a palace of diamonds, a house of amethyst and crystal from which the ancient darkness had been driven out by glory.”

(view spoiler)

Arha knows that all she is doing is forbidden, and fears for her life:

“As she stumbled forward she cried out in her mind, which was as dark, as shaken as the subterranean vault, “Forgive me. O my Masters, O unnamed ones, most ancient ones, forgive me, forgive me!” There was no answer. There had never been an answer.”

She is advised by Manan not to pursue this any longer, for her own safety. (view spoiler)

We see a more subtle, internal struggle with **The Tombs of Atuan**'s protagonist than in “*A Wizard of Earthsea*”. Tenar is a more revolutionary character than Ged, as she rebels and struggles against the confines of her social role. Yet they both share elements of the story of an heroic quest, and work against type, exploring issues of race, political systems, anthropology and culture, and one having a female main character. From the author's own remarks, this subversion of some of the tropes common to the genre of fantasy at the time, was quite deliberate. Her exploration of religious themes, ethical questions and gender issues within the framework of **The Tombs of Atuan**, is quite remarkable.

It is perhaps inevitable that Tenar will want to (view spoiler)

it is now clear to Tenar that there is a very real power for evil.

“She did feel it. A dark hand had let go its lifelong hold upon her heart. But she did not feel joy, as she had in the mountains. She put her head down in her arms and cried, and her cheeks were salt and wet. She cried for the waste of her years in bondage to a useless evil. She wept in pain, because she was free ...”

Tenar now feels bereft, and cannot see forward, keenly feeling the loss of her identity. It is a difficult task to abandon everything one has ever known, to rebel against the very society that nurtured her. But she now saw it as a stifling dogma, which had conditioned her beliefs and understanding of the world. (view spoiler)

Both these first Earthsea novels are quite short, but rich in imagery and ideas. Just as in “*A Wizard of Earthsea*”, the writing is spare, with no excess, but the language is lyrical, so we find beautiful evocative passages in **The Tombs of Atuan** too. The description of the labyrinths, and of the oppressive regime, are very claustrophobic, and the later passages feel wonderfully fresh and open in contrast. This part was apparently was inspired by the Oregon deserts in her creation of Atuan, the author saying it was a similarly harsh and hauntingly beautiful landscape:

“It was evening. The sun was down behind the mountains that loomed close and high to westward, but its afterglow filled all earth and sky: a vast, clear, wintry sky, a vast, barren, golden land of mountains and wide valleys. The wind was down. It was cold, and absolutely silent. Nothing moved. The leaves of the sagebrushes nearby were dry and grey, the stalks of tiny dried-up desert herbs prickled her hand. The huge silent glory of light burned on every twig and withered leaf and stem, on the hills, in the air.”

It is a beautifully balanced book; a book to make us feel, and to make us think.

“The Earth is beautiful, and bright, and kindly, but that is not all. The Earth is also terrible, and dark, and cruel. The rabbit shrieks dying in the green meadows. The mountains clench their great hands full of hidden fire. There are sharks in the sea, and there is cruelty in men’s eyes.”

In both novels the protagonists feel an internal conflict, and learn to discover new ways of thinking and being. Their heroic quests are also both journeys of maturation, and in **The Tombs of Atuan** Tenar has profound regrets, and begins to understand that genuine freedom will be difficult, with many burdens and responsibilities. She has had power in her own sphere from the age of six; has known her gods, and their holy places for a very long time. Tenar has taken charge of her own destiny as it was laid down, from very early in the story. Because of this, the outcome of the story feels far more like a conscious decision, rather than something that simply happens to her. She shows great courage.

The novel has a powerful sense of place, set in claustrophobic catacombs, and as we read we see that the darkness of the labyrinth is also a metaphor for ignorance, fear, and sterility. Yet although there seems to have been so much waste, cruelty and oppression, in the end there is much hope of enlightenment:

(view spoiler)

“Living, being in the world, was a much greater and stranger thing than she had ever dreamed.”

“What she had begun to learn was the weight of liberty. Freedom is a heavy load, a great and strange burden for the spirit to undertake. It is not easy. It is not a gift given, but a choice made, and the choice may be a hard one. The road goes upward towards the light; but the laden traveller may never reach the end of it.”

Ahmad Sharabiani says

The Tombs of Atuan (The Earthsea Cycle, #2), Ursula K. Le Guin

The Tombs of Atuan is a fantasy novel by the American author Ursula K. Le Guin, first published in the Winter 1970 issue of *Worlds of Fantasy*, and published as a book by Atheneum Books in 1971. It is the second book in the Earthsea series after *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1969). The Tombs of Atuan was a Newbery Honor Book in 1972.

[illegible]

And at the year's end she is taken to the Hall of the Throne and her name is given back to those who are her Masters, the Nameless Ones: for she is the nameless one, the Priestess Ever Reborn.

This was a relatively quick read, and while it seems that it did take a while for the story to pick up the pace, Le Guin does a great job of setting up the story and the characters.

It isn't exactly action packed, but the writing is beautiful and it makes me wonder what is to come in the books following in the series.

This is a very fine fantasy. I say fine because it evokes many great labyrinthian images, old, old traditions of sacrifice to the Dark Old Ones, and eventually, freedom from the same.

There's a lot of beauty here, and while I didn't love it on quite the same scale as Ged's original journey in the first book, it's mainly because I liked the core theme better.

Other readers will absolutely take out of this book different layers. I can say that confidently because there are some really beautiful and clear layers interwoven here.

The past and the evil in the past can be broken and escaped. That which was broken can be renewed.

And what's more, so much of it has to do with our own perceptions! Of course, isn't it always? :)

Our MC is the high priestess of an ancient cult and Ged does show up halfway. It's really quite amusing to see just how easily she toys with the poor "greatest wizard", but I admit to liking this book a lot more after that point.

It's really something else to see how clear and easy this is to read compared to a lot of modern fantasy and it's even more interesting because it stands up to the test of time. Le Guin definitely has great skill. :)

Max says

Reread, for the first time in a long while. When I was thirteen I appreciated this book but I didn't like it as much as *Wizard* and *Farthest Shore*—there's less magic, less incident, and a lot more slow creeping dread. On this reread the dread itself became magical. And much as I love Ged, Tenar feels more... like she exists from the marrow out. I have a theory about this, but it's more of an essay-length theory than a Goodreads capsule review theory. In short, brilliant and deep.

Jacob says

June 2012

I want to give this five stars, but I'm afraid one of the next ones will be even better, and my attempts to rate it higher will cause Goodreads to implode. Or something.

On second thought, no. Five stars. Let's do this thing.

You've probably read or heard somewhere that you can put a frog (it's a frog, right?) in a pot of water and set it on a stove, and the frog will never notice what's happening until it's too late. So they say. Well, Ursula K. Le Guin writes like that: you open the book thinking you're going for a swim, and you never notice the water getting hotter until it burns. She'll boil you alive, Le Guin will--and she'll do it *with words*.

Well, put another pot on, woman--I'm ready to be cooked.

Deniz Balcı says

Hep aynı şeyleri söylemek istemiyorum ama bazı kitaplar gerçekten ilk gençlikte okunmalı. 'Yerdeniz Serisi'nin bu ikinci kitabı o kadar güçlü bir girizgahla umutlandırdı ve merakla okumaya devam etmemi sağladı ki sonu büyük hayal kırıklığı oldu. Okuma zevki açısından bir sorun olduğunu söylemiyorum, zira elime aldım ve tek oturuşta okudum. Kendini okutturan bir anlatım var ve bana göre birçok insanın bu seriyi, fazla sevmesinin temelinde de bu var. Ancak bana göre bir eseri kolayca okuyabilmek, o eseri bize sevdiren kollarından biri olmamalı.

Ursula'nın bu seriyi kaleme aldığı seneler, Joseph Campbell'in 'monomit' yapıları, en çok konuşturdu ve uygulandı seneler. O günlerin kokusu sinmiş kitabın üzerine. Her tabandan bir 'ben burdayım' diye barın yerleştirme çabası. Cinsellik, uyanık, tamamlanma, bilinmeyen, çarpışma, olgunlaşma, eksik parça vs. Arketiplerin karışıkları havada uçuşuyor. Okurken zihinsel anlamda bir bu tarafa bir öte tarafa savuruyor. Hiç bunları düşünmeden kendimi hikayenin içine bırakabilseydim... diye dedim ya bazı kitaplar daha erken, ilk gençlikte okunmalı.

Kitap kötü bir kitap değil ama, onu kastetmiyorum. Sadece alanı dar, hacmi az.

Robert says

I've read the first three Earthsea books a heap of times, starting when I was at my academic peak (i.e. in primary school). Through-out my childhood readings I preferred the two that sandwiched this one. Looking back it is easy for me to see why: it wasn't about Ged and it didn't have enough sailing about to far flung places (i.e. exploration) in it. In contrast, I have observed that a number of female Goodreaders who are also LeGuin fans, rate this higher than the other two. I can take a guess as to why that might be; there are no female characters in the other two. There are some women, even some who play pivotal roles, in both, but they are not fully formed characters, let alone protagonists. Most of these women are unpleasant or downright evil. A Wizard of Earthsea and The Farthest Shore are entirely male-dominated. The Tombs of Atuan, in contrast, is almost entirely female dominated.

THIS REVIEW HAS BEEN CURTAILED IN PROTEST AT GOODREADS' CENSORSHIP POLICY

See the complete review here:

<http://arbieroo.booklikes.com/post/33...>

Brad says

Half way through reading The Tombs of Atuan, I was sitting downstairs playing my xBox late at night when I heard voices drifting down from upstairs. I sat and listened to the door muffled murmurs of Miloš & Brontë, but I couldn't make out what they were saying.

Usually I'd just call up to them and tell them it was time to shoosh and go to sleep, but I was curious to figure out what they were talking about. Even obscured I could tell it wasn't the usual joke fest or scary story, there was something different about this talk.

What was different, it turned out, was that Miloš was Ged and Brontë was Tenar, and they were in the dark room of the Great Treasure, playing the Tombs of Atuan. They're still seven, only just, and there they were, late in the night, in their bunkbeds, improvising a discussion between the Eaten One and Sparrowhawk. I decided to let them play, so I left them undisturbed and went back to my game.

A few days later, I was working in my office and I heard Miloš outside my door talking to Vetch from A Wizard of Earthsea. He was playing Ged again.

Weird as this may sound, it makes me incredibly proud of them. There is no big Hollywood movie with toys and a marketing campaign to nudge my kids in this direction. There is no cultural weight to lead them into playing at Ged and Tenar. There is only the words of one of our greatest authors, Ursula K. Le Guin and the voice I added to the books. That's it, but it was enough. Great literature has that power.

Please read this to your kids whomever you may be. It will be with them always.

Laila says

Ekip okumalarına dahil kitaplardan biriydi...

Ursula Le Guin'i her okuyuşumda biraz daha seviyor, kalemine hayran oluyorum. Ne geç kalmışım okumaya...

Bu kitapta Tenar'ın hikayesini okudum, Atuanda mezarlar ve karanlıkla yüzleştim. Okurken kendi yaşamımdaki dönemeleri ve kararlarımı sorguladığım zamanlarım oldu...

Ve Ged.. Cevik Atmacam... Onun duruşunu, karakterini öyle seviyorum ki...

Defalarca okunması bir kitap!
