

### Curtis A. Weyant

#### **"We have nothing else to give": Kindness and Cruelty in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness***

Scholars such as Ellen Peel and David J. Lake have noted the contrasting symbols in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. However, little attention has been given to how the activities of the characters contrast. This paper expands the study of dualistic metaphors in Le Guin's story to include character behavior, particularly acts of cruelty and kindness, which reinforce each other throughout the novel, as with Tibe's propaganda to incite fear and the banishment of Estraven, whose three days' grace twists Karhidish hospitality customs. As cruelty increases through institutionalization—primarily through Tibe's militarization efforts and the development a prison culture—kindness becomes more important on a personal level. Ultimately, the mass cruelty of of institutionalization is counterbalanced, to some degree, through acceptance of "The Other"—the most empathetic and personal form of kindness there is.

*Curtis A. Weyant is a digital content specialist by trade and a student of speculative literature by choice. He edits the Signum Eagle, co-hosts Kat & Curt's TV-ReView podcast on Buffy/Angel and Doctor Who, and makes mostly harmless literary musings at CurtisWeyant.com. His writings have been featured in McSweeney's Internet Tendency, The Binnacle and Slayage, and he has a forthcoming (Spring 2015) essay in the second edition of Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion.*



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