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<CT>Paying “Utopia” ~~A~~a Subversive Fidelity; or, An Affective Trip to Anarres

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<abs>Abstract

This article pays “subversive fidelity” to utopia by rethinking what might be meant by the “good,” “no,” and “place”~~;~~ and how they might be brought together in an ambiguous but productive consistency. Specifically, it does this by drawing on Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza’s ethics, Sara Ahmed’s concept of the “affect alien,” and Doreen Massey’s understanding of place. It then applies and develops the theoretical approach through a reading of Anarres, as described in Ursula K. Le Guin’s novel *The Dispossessed*. ~~Whilst~~ While the theory of utopia produced is intended normatively, the article also shows how it can be used as a methodology for the reading of specific places~~;~~ as well as ~~and also~~ how it can be used alongside other utopian studies methods to read utopian texts.</abs>

<ky>Keywords: utopia, place, power, affect, *The Dispossessed*</ky>

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It ~~is~~has been five hundred years since the term “~~u~~utopia”² was coined; and in that time it has been widely (mis)read, (ab)used, and distorted. This is no bad thing in and of itself, for meanings change over time; and as Ernst Bloch notes, “~~t~~To limit the utopian to the Thomas More variety, or simply to try to orientate it in that direction, would be like trying to reduce electricity to the amber from which it gets its Greek name and in which it

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was first noticed. Indeed, the utopian coincides so little with the novel of the ideal state that the whole totality of *philosophy* becomes necessary . . . to do justice to the content of that designated by utopia.”¹ Nonetheless, I often find myself dissatisfied with particular applications of ~~“utopia”~~: not only colloquially; but also in contemporary utopian studies, in which ~~“place”~~—one of utopia’s three constituent terms—is often sidelined, leaving utopia as a function of thought or a temporal process.²

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Here, I propose to pay “subversive fidelity” to More’s term by considering how we might conceive of “place,” along with utopia’s other two constituent terms: ~~“good”~~ and ~~“no.”~~ I consider how these concepts might function; and how they might be thought together to rethink utopia. (Un)fortunately, I do not have the “whole totality of philosophy” at my disposal, but I offer an understanding of place inspired by recent geographical theory; draw on Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza to develop an “ethical,” affective account of “the good”; and turn to Sara Ahmed’s critique of happiness to ~~theorise~~theorize “the no.” These approaches are brought together to develop a particular understanding of utopia as a place constituted by particular affective relations (“affective utopia”), which is developed through a reading of Anarres, as described in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (although ultimately I argue that Anarres probably cannot be thought of as an affective utopia). This provides some “flesh” on the bones of theory while~~st~~ showing how a theory of affective utopianism can be used to read spatial practice. Thinking through *The Dispossessed*’s subtitle (“An Ambiguous Utopia”), meanwhile, allows me to show how affective utopia is a doubly ambiguous form: once at the level of its constitution, once at the level of judgement.

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The affective theory of utopia developed can be read both methodologically and

normatively. It does not offer an analysis of a particular historical tendency, nor attempt to create a general working definition of utopia (although this is not to say that it is entirely divorced from “fictional” and “real” spatial practice: indeed, it is heavily informed by them). It offers a form of utopianism I think it would be productive to adopt in struggle; and ~~while~~ I do not believe that any form of utopia(nism) could be politically sufficient in and of itself, it is an approach I ~~favor~~; and is an approach that can be used to read particular places, whether “real” or “fictional.” ~~although~~ This does not have to be to the exclusion of other theoretical approaches, which I draw on in the final section of this essay to argue that some of Anarres’ s failings cannot be separated from the silences and inconsistencies in Le Guin’s narrative.

<1>Place

My insistence on the importance of place for utopia is motivated by pragmatism rather than etymological pedantry, for it is place that provides utopia’s conceptual specificity. ~~While~~ all concepts of “the good” implicitly point to (even if they deny) a “good place,” it is possible to engage in a discussion of “the good” without making explicit reference to the places that result from or prefigure it. Negativity, meanwhile, is often positioned against place.³ The conceptual power of utopia stems from the fact that it thinks both “the good” and “the no” in terms of the “real” or “imaginary” places that these concepts might produce. Yet place is rarely paid explicit attention in utopian studies. David Harvey’s *Spaces of Hope* argues for place as a part of utopianism, but does not consider its function as a constituent part of utopia in any depth.⁴ Where there is engagement with what might be called “places” in utopian studies, their internal operations are often

sidelined; and there is no reflection on precisely what the concept “place” does for the concept “utopia.” Here, I outline three reasons for this: (1) a privileging of utopia’s function over its content;⁴ (2) the use of the term “~~utopia~~” to refer to a method;⁵ and (3) a privileging of the temporal over the spatial.

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Perhaps as a result of the strength of literary approaches in utopian studies, utopia is often approached hermeneutically: the main object of study is the function of utopia-as-text. This approach has both negative and positive modes: ~~T~~The former privileges “estrangement,” with utopian texts held to unpick readers’ certainty about the finitude or necessity of the present;⁵ while ~~est~~ the latter focuses on how utopian texts “educate desire” for a world other than that which exists.⁶ For some, these functions can be separated from the precise content of a given text; or are strengthened by the failure of the text to satisfy or convince. As Ruth Levitas writes, ~~summarising-summarizing~~ Miguel Abensour, “~~T~~The point is not whether one agrees or disagrees with the institutional arrangements, but rather that the utopian experiment disrupts the taken-for-granted nature of the present.”⁷ Fredric Jameson, meanwhile, argues that the failure of the utopian text to escape the conditions of its production provides utopia with its estranging power (best understood, he says, as an “anti-anti-utopianism”).⁸ In contrast, Tom Moylan offers detailed descriptions of the “critical” utopian societies in four novels (including *The Dispossessed*); and argues that their complexity means ~~that~~ they are likely to have a more profoundly estranging effect on their readers.⁹ Similarly, John P. Clark argues that “the most powerful utopian works are also profoundly *topian*—they create a vivid sense of place grounded in deeply experienced realities”;¹⁰ while ~~est Ruth~~ Levitas states that close engagement with the content of a utopian text is required in order for its affirmative

potential to be ~~realised~~realized; and argues that this potential is greatest when the text presents an alternative society in considerable detail. Here, then, we find that the place described by a utopian text is of importance, but the primary focus remains on the relationship between the text and its reader; rather than on the content of the text (i.e., the qualities of the place) itself. The method, function, or operation of utopia is privileged over a consideration of utopia-as-place.¹¹ This is, of course, extremely useful—and can be ~~utilised~~utilized alongside the method I develop here—but its dominance in the field perhaps obscures other ways of approaching utopia.

This is particularly the case when the approach is developed such that the utopian method/function/operation is named “utopia.” This semantic shift is the second way in which utopia-as-place is obscured in utopian studies. Here, rather than “utopia” functioning as a place that inspires estrangement and/or the education of desire, it describes the reading of utopian texts and the effect this has on readers. Darko Suvin refers to utopia as “a method rather than a state” and so something that “cannot be realized or not realized—it can only be applied”;¹² while Jameson describes utopia as “an operation calculated to disclose the limits of our own imagination of the future” (at times conflating this with his “anti-anti-utopianism”).¹³ For Ruth Levitas, utopia constitutes an “imaginary reconstitution of society”; and includes the act of writing—as well as reading—the utopian text.

While I do not deny that there are operations, functions, and methods of utopia (both estranging and affirmative), I do not accept the claim that these *are* utopia. Referring to them as such leaves no term for the places that ~~catalyse~~catalyze this operation; collapses utopia into radical or critical thought more broadly; and leaves ~~the~~

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analysts in the awkward position of having to make clear every time they use the term “~~utopia~~” whether they are naming the textual “good place” that ~~catalyses~~ catalyzes a process of thought, or the process itself.

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The final manner in which place is sidelined in utopian studies is the positioning of utopia as a temporal—rather than spatial—phenomenon~~a~~. Here, the focus is on those who experience or produce utopia directly rather than those who encounter it textually. Ernst Bloch’s *The Principle of Hope*, for example, positions utopia as a temporal force immanent ~~to~~ in a number of “everyday” activities, expressing an immanent collective desire for a state of abundance and fulfillment that has not ~~yet~~ arrived (which he names *Heimat* or the *Ultimum*).¹⁴ This expands the scope of utopia, but does not help us to address how utopia-as-place might function, and the temporal tendency Bloch names utopia would be better referred to as utopianism or “the utopian.” This is the approach recommended (although inconsistently applied) by Angelika Bammer, who brings Bloch into dialogue with a utopian trend in 1970s feminism, and argues for the replacement of “‘a utopia’ as something fixed . . . with the idea of ‘the utopian’ as an *approach toward*.”¹⁵ Yet, if utopia is no longer a category we can use, what is this an approach toward?

Moving away from this Blochian teleology, a number of feminist, anarchist, and autonomist approaches to utopia have implicitly or explicitly favored the temporal aspects of utopia over the spatial. Lucy Sargisson articulates a feminist utopianism that “constantly affirm[s] play, process and dynamism,” but does not explicitly articulate how this produces place;¹⁶ while Lisa Garforth figures Deleuze and Guattari’s “lines of flight” as a utopian gesture, but does not explore the places these might produce.¹⁷

Valérie Fournier uses “utopianism rather than ‘utopia’ to emphasize movement over static visions of a better order,”¹⁸ a move referenced (and implicitly adopted) by Ruth Kinna.¹⁹ Judith Suissa outlines an “anarchist utopianism” in her analysis of anarchist schools—which are explicitly figured as “spaces”—but does not call these utopias and is hostile to the term.²⁰ Similarly, Andy Robinson and Simon Tormey argue that “~~at~~ the most basic level, utopia is not a particular space or place but a movement or flow which in turn may create new spatial possibilities.”²¹ What, then, do we call these spaces; or spatial possibilities?

Others are closer to the position I adopt below and refer to them as utopias. Harvey argues for a “spatiotemporal utopianism” that seeks to dialectically unify Blochian “utopias of process” and spatialized “social utopias.” This dialectical back-and-forth sees space and time as distinct (even opposing) forms, however, with time associated with process and place associated with closure: the approach I take below sees them as inherently ~~intra~~-interconnected. Laurence Davis writes of the prefigurative “grounded utopias” generated by social movements, with the term “~~grounded~~” emphasizing both their spatial nature and the fact that they are immanent rather than transcendent.²² Uri Gordon argues that “anarchist utopias are . . . places created by the actions of individuals and communities taking history into their own hands”;²³ and Carissa Honeywell identifies an anarchist utopianism in the work of thinkers such as Paul Goodman and Colin Ward, which is spatially present “beneath” society.²⁴ With the exception of Harvey, however, these thinkers do not reflect on precisely what “place” means; ~~nor~~ how it might function in “utopia.” It is to this task that I now turn.

Place is, of course, closely related to space—a concept treated with suspicion in

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radical thought, in which it is often understood as an ahistorical form constituted ~~of~~ either ~~of~~ inertia or chaos.²⁵ Place fares even worse, frequently understood as space imbued with a fixed, essential, and authentic identity.²⁶ Attempts to create “good places,” then, have been seen as attempts to create oases cut off from material dynamics of social change (when really it is time that will redeem us); and/or as the once-and-for-all establishment of authoritarian perfectionism—the top-down application of a predetermined vision of “the good” on a supposedly inert or chaotic volume of space (and its inhabitants).

While~~st~~ there are utopian studies scholars who position utopia as a perfect, hierarchical place,²⁷ and utopia can function as an oasis cut off from historical operations of power, insisting on the “topos” of utopia does not necessitate such a philosophy.

Rather, it is possible to turn to approaches that see space (re)produced through the changing relations of bodies; and ~~which~~ (re)producinges these bodies.²⁸ Following Karen Barad, I frame these relations as “intra-actions” rather than “interactions,” in order to stress that the bodies do not pre-exist this coming together but are produced through it.²⁹ In thinking how these intra-actions produce space, the focus shifts from “enumerating” space by describing what occurs *in it*; to describing the becomings that *(re)produce* it.³⁰ These becomings will be of a particular character, of course, shaped by any number of factors, and so “place” can be taken to refer to “particular articulations” of spatial relations, as Doreen Massey argues. “If space is . . . a simultaneity of stories-so-far,” she writes, “then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of those intersections within that wider setting, and what is made of them. And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions.”³¹

This can be illustrated with reference to Anarres, the “anarchist” moon of the planet Urras (a fictional surrogate for 1970s Earth, from ~~where-which~~ Anarres’ s founders emigrated a couple ~~of~~ hundred years before the action in the novel).³² on which much of Ursula (K.) Le Guin’s 1974 novel *The Dispossessed* is set (the remainder is set on Urras~~;~~ or in transit between the two worlds). Anarres is ~~a~~-itself a major actor in the novel,³³ making *The Dispossessed* one of the “profoundly topian” novels that Clark references~~;~~ and suitable for analysis through the lens of place (though I note below that it is important to step back and provide a more textual analysis as well).³⁴ Implicitly referencing understandings of place critiqued above, ~~Winter Elliott~~[Jennifer Rodgers](#) argues that Anarres provides “a working model for utopia as evolution—*not a place*, but a process of becoming.” ~~(emphasis added)~~,³⁵ but Davis disagrees, noting that it is animated by “a generous Spirit of Place.”³⁶ This “spirit” can most clearly be identified in the understanding of place shown by Shevek, the novel’s main character~~;~~ and resonates with the alternative approach outlined above. ~~Socialised~~[Socialized](#) by Anarres’ s “Odonian” ideology—and inspired by his research in temporal physics—Shevek believes (with echoes of Heraclitus) that: “~~f~~you shall not go down twice to the same river. Nor can you go home again.” Yet he rejects a straightforward privileging of becoming over place (or even their separation), adding: “~~w~~What is most changeable is shown to be fullest of eternity, and your relationship to the river, and the river’s relationship to you and to itself, turns out to be at once more complex and more reassuring than a mere ~~a~~-lack of identity. You *can* go home again . . . so long as you understand that home is a place where you have never been.”³⁷ This invocation of place-in-becoming resonates with (half-forgotten) Odonian ontology, which states that “~~f~~to be whole is to be part; true

voyage is return.”³⁸

Extrapolating from Massey’s definition of place, it can be said that to call a place a utopia means privileging particular connections and exclusions; and framing these through the “ambiguous consistency” of the “good” and the “no.” Such an editorial role requires responsibility; and judgement about whether a place is or is not utopia (or even is a dystopia) can only ever be provisional, partial, and situated. This, then, is the double ambiguity of utopia that I referred to earlier: it is constituted by ambiguity, and labelling a place “utopia” is always an ambiguous task.³⁹ Before either of these ambiguities can be shown in action, however, an account of the concept of the “good” is necessary.

<1>The “Good”

Lyman Tower Sargent argues that “~~h~~*perfect, perfection*, and their variants are freely used by scholars in defining utopias. They should not be.”⁴⁰ Normatively speaking, I agree.

Yet an empirico-historical approach to the concept of utopia must include such understandings because—whether or not they are understood by their authors, founders, or inhabitants as perfect places—the history of utopia contains a number of (fictional and real) places to which perfection is ascribed.⁴¹ Such places are oriented toward a particular understanding of “the good” that—once ~~realised~~realized—is held to remove the need for further change.

It is my contention that such places would not be “good” to inhabit; and that this understanding of the good is hostile to the understanding of place outlined above.⁴² To avoid this, I turn to Gilles Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza, from whom he draws a distinction between morality and ethics: the former as a system of thought seeking to fix

life around a predetermined vision of the good, the latter as an “affective” approach where the good emerges immanently.⁴³ A useful starting point here is Deleuze’s definition of the ethical good and bad as:

<ext>two senses of the variation of the power of acting: the decrease of this power (sadness) is bad; its increase (joy) is good. . . . Objectively, then, everything that increases or enhances our power of acting is good, and that which diminishes or restrains it is bad; and we only know good and bad through the feeling of joy or sadness of which we are conscious. . . . Since the power of acting is what opens the capacity for being affected to the greatest number of things, a thing is good “which so disposes the body that it can be affected in a greater number of ways.”⁴⁴</ext>

It is this “ethical” concept of the good that forms a constitutive feature of the utopianism I outline here.

Before going further, it is important to unpack two (related) points, which challenge any necessary opposition between the individual and the collective. First, “body” does not simply refer to the physical dimensions of the individual subject. Rather, it relates to a “dynamic ensemble of relations . . . defined by its affective capacity.”⁴⁵ A building, then, may be a body, as may a piece of technology, a crowd, a single human being, or a place. Changes to a body’s affective capacity occur through intra-actions “below,” “alongside,” or “above” the body. Thus, I avoid the term “*individual*” (except as a critical category) in favour of Lewis Hyde’s use of the term “*dividual*”: a figure

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“constituted by the complexity of the world around” ~~them~~ ~~them~~ him for her.⁴⁶

This leads me on to the second point I wish to make about this understanding of the body: that an increase in or enhancement of a body’s power to act *also* increases its power to be acted upon (and vice-versa). Good relations of power are mutual: the increase of one dividual’s power increases the power of other dividuals to act; —and thus of the collective to act. Starhawk ~~emphasises~~ emphasizes this by referring to “power-with,” a term useful for decentering individualism.⁴⁷ This is a form of non-hierarchy, with power held and produced in common; and it produces considerable freedom, understood as “the possibility of something new and truly different coming about.”⁴⁸ This “new” does not emerge at a pre-given moment; ~~but~~ rather, at times of “singularity,” akin to the bifurcation of a curve,⁴⁹ troubling the understanding of time as a homogeneous, irreversible succession of moments.⁵⁰ This, I maintain, is a communist politics: communist in the sense that power is held in common (and this must necessarily include goods and land); ~~and~~ in the sense of being “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.”⁵¹

Anarres is (in part) (re)produced through this “good.” Property and land ~~is~~ are held in common, but this is far from the communism of liberal fantasy: Le Guin explicitly notes that the Anarresti retain their (in)dividuality.⁵² Strength is understood to come through power-with: having been told that “~~t~~he law of evolution is that the strongest survives,” Shevek replies by saying, “Yes, and the strongest, in the existence of any social animal, are those who are most social. In human terms, the most ethical.”⁵³ To be ethically good is to work with others for the mutual increase of affective capacities; and being open to the affective encounter is an ethical imperative, for “to lock out is to lock

in.”⁵⁴ This communal strength (“power-with”) is also figured as a freedom-in-common: “It’s your nature to be Tirin,” says Shevek to a friend, “and my nature to be Shevek, and our common nature to be Odonians, responsible to one another. And that responsibility is our freedom. To avoid it, would be to lose our freedom.”⁵⁵ Pravic, the language spoken on Anarres, also plays a role in reproducing these good power relations; and is so successful that Shevek struggles to understand the Urrasti concepts of “superiority and inferiority.”⁵⁶

<1>The “No”

Thus far, Anarres appears [straightforwardly](#) utopian. But we cannot abandon Anarres (or utopia) here—we only have “the good place.” There is no ambiguity: attention must be paid to the “no.” One way to do this would be to note that such “good places” could never exist in reality because of the inevitability of relationships of domination emerging, even where there is no formal hierarchy.⁵⁷ Domination is ethically “bad” as it reduces the ability of bodies to affect and be affected. It is a “disaffecting”⁵⁸ force that reproduces any given place as a dystopia (“bad place”).⁵⁹

Domination on Anarres is illustrated through Shevek’s relationship with Sabul, his senior ~~U~~university colleague. Given Anarres’ ~~s~~ supposed nonhierarchy, seniority should be strictly a matter of age, but it is obvious to the reader (and eventually Shevek) that Sabul informally dominates Shevek. While ~~st~~ Shevek wants the “ansible” he is developing (a device for instantaneous communication between any two points in space) to be available for the common good, Sabul wishes to appropriate it for private gain. He behaves, in other words, as an individual.⁶⁰ Shevek’s faith in Anarres-as-utopia thus

becomes dangerous, for it allows Sabul's domination to pass unnoticed. Utopia-as-place is separated from the processes of utopianism needed to constantly (re)produce it.

While ~~est~~ a hierarchical distribution of power (at least one with any sense of permanence) is incompatible with utopianism as described here, it is not enough to believe that nonhierarchical ~~organisation~~organization automatically and permanently creates a utopia: “tyrannies of habit”⁶¹ ossify social relations and prevent new becomings, limiting freedom. As the Urrasti Veia points out to Shevek, in some respects it might be better to have a formal hierarchy—at least then your enemy is visible.⁶² Indeed, Sabul exploits the invisibility of domination—and Shevek's faith in Anarres—as—utopia—by claiming that “this isn't some kind of hierarchy” in an attempt to prevent Shevek challenging his power.⁶³ While ~~est~~ Pravic may enable the Anarresti to reproduce the good more easily because hierarchy is unthinkable, it also prevents them from ~~recognising~~recognizing domination when it occurs.

Domination and “locking out” are not only internal to Anarres: they also mark its relationship with Urras. *The Dispossessed* opens on Anarres with a description of “a wall” ~~which that~~ “did not look important.” Despite its modesty, the wall is a border: it functions to keep out Urrasti residents and so prevents intra-actions that might threaten the social order (as with all borders, it is reinforced by xenophobia).⁶⁴ This attempt to keep Urras separate is in part designed to prevent statist behaviors from Urras from disrupting the functioning of Anarres; yet it ends up contributing to Anarres' ~~s~~ ossification, and brings to mind more obviously authoritarian “walled” utopias such as the City of the Sun described by Campanella.⁶⁵

It is tempting to say, then, that utopia is “no place” because it is impossible to

~~realise~~realize. The very techniques the Anarresti have developed to create a utopia have resulted in its ossification towards dystopia.⁶⁶ Yet this argument smacks of the liberal defeatism in which any attempt to ~~realise~~realize a utopia necessarily results in a dystopia (a move ~~which-that~~ proclaims our own world as utopian as it disavows the utopian). I want to suggest that “ambiguously” bringing the “no” and the “good” together such that they obtain a consistency enables us to see utopia as a possibility. To do this, I want to focus on the role of Shevek’s friend Bedap, who notices Sabul’s domination, links it to broader operations of power on Anarres⁶⁷ and tries to make Shevek aware of it. Initially, Shevek rejects him and repeats his faith in Anarres-as-utopia:

<ext>“What are you talking about, Dap? We have no power structure.”

“No? What makes Sabul so strong?”

“Not a power⁶⁸ structure, a government⁶⁹. . .”

“No. We have no government, no laws, all right. But as far as I can see, *ideas* never were controlled by laws and governments. . . ⁷⁰You can’t crush ideas by suppressing them. You can only crush them by ignoring them. By refusing to think—refusing to change. And that’s precisely what our society is doing! Sabul uses you where he can, and where he can’t, he prevents you from publishing, from teaching, even from working. Right? In other words, he has power over you. Where does he get it from? Not from vested authority, there isn’t any. Not from intellectual excellence, he hasn’t any. He gets it from the innate cowardice of the average human mind. Public opinion! That’s the power structure he’s part of, and knows how to use. The unadmitted, inadmissible government that rules the

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Odonian society by stifling the individual mind.”⁶⁷

Bedap explicitly figures these operations of power as an example of “disaffection,” asking Shevek if he has ever thought about “what the analogic mode calls ‘disease,’ social disaffection, discontent, alienation, that this might analogically also be called pain—what you meant when you talked about pain, suffering? And that, like pain, it serves a function in the organism?”⁶⁸ Here, Bedap moves toward figuring Anarres as a dystopia. Yet, by turning to the work of Sara Ahmed and reading Bedap as “affect alien,”⁶⁹ it is possible to see this articulation of disaffection as a utopian moment. Here we arrive at the second way in which utopia is ambiguous.

The “affect alien” is the individual who does not “correctly” perform happy affect. “Maintaining public comfort”—the unambiguous celebration of Anarres-as-utopia, in this case—requires them to “‘go along with it,’ to agree to where [they] are placed,” because “to refuse to be placed would mean to be seen as trouble, as causing discomfort for others.” Thus, “there is a political struggle about how we attribute good and bad feelings, which hesitates around the apparently simple question of who introduces what feelings to whom.”⁷⁰ The affect alien is ~~is~~ are disempowered: their ability to participate in the intra-actions that create place is reduced. Should they attempt to articulate their negative feelings, it is they who are identified as (and blamed for being) the source of this negativity.⁷¹ Thus, Shevek resents Bedap’s articulations of domination on Anarres, even reacting “violently” to his arguments.⁷² Ahmed, however, argues that the “badness” may well emanate from the supposed “good place” (though she talks about “objects,” rather than places *per se*).

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Yet Anarresti could (ambiguously) reproduce Anarres—as-utopia by not “presum[ing] bad feelings are backward and conservative and good feelings are forward and progressive”⁷³; and not seeing bad feelings as “oriented to the past, as a kind of stubbornness that ‘stops’ the subject from embracing the future.”⁷³ Rather, the articulation of Anarres’s “badness” should be understood as potentially productive: the estranging “no” of the affect alien can open space for freedom.—“To share what deviates from happiness is to open up possibility, to be alive to possibility.”⁷⁴ Indeed, eventually Shevek is prepared to receive Bedap’s “bad feelings,” and these play an important role in persuading him to travel to Urras, where he has the breakthrough that allows him to create the “ansible”; and is inspired to ~~organise~~organize for change on Anarres by Urrasti anticolonial activists. Bedap and Shevek’s “no” to Anarres thus opens up new intra-actions: they come into a productively ambiguous relationship with the “good” and—ultimately—help increase the capacity of bodies across the universe to affect and be affected by each other,⁷⁵ enhancing both intensive and extensive power-with.

This “no” is, then, ambiguously consistent with the understanding of the “good” developed above; and attests to the importance of seeing those “who refuse to let go of suffering, who are even prepared to kill some forms of joy” as “an alternative model of the social good”: what Clark refers to as a “discordant harmony.”⁷⁶ Sometimes the joyful “yes” of good intra-actions may be the driving force of utopianism; sometimes it may be the act of saying “no” to actions that hinder such intra-actions. David Eden’s argument is pertinent here. For him, we should not “create a paradigm that sees some kind of split between ‘Noes’ and ‘Yeses.’ Rather . . . our attempts to fundamentally change social

relations always have these elements bound up within each other. It is an error to argue that one must precede the other.”⁷⁷ The good and the no, in other words, can work together to (re)produce “the good place that is no place.”

This utopianism does not progress “from one point to another”—as in Oscar ~~Wilde’s~~ Wilde’s famous claim that humanity sees a better country (utopia) and then sets sail for it⁷⁸—but is “perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival.”⁷⁹ Thus, as has hopefully become clear, this utopianism (as a temporal ~~organising~~ organizing force) is not oriented to a utopian blueprint (though utopian visions may play a heuristic role in affective utopianism). Rather, it produces utopias (as places); and these places ~~beget-beget~~ further utopianism (to the extent that they do not ossify towards dystopia). Utopianism’s temporality and utopia’s spatiality are mixed together and cannot be separated as they are in Wilde’s analogy of voyage and arrival. This resonates with contemporary arguments in geography and physics ~~which-that~~ state that space and time cannot be fully separated.⁸⁰ The affective utopia is thus prefigurative, but it is not prefigurative of a final form; rather—to paraphrase Deleuze and Guattari on immanence—it is “prefigurative only to itself.”⁸¹ It is this sense of impermanence that—the reader hopes—Shevek and the revolutionary syndicate will reintroduce to Anarres.

<1>Anarres’s Silences and Inconsistencies

There remain, however, a number of relations of domination on Anarres that it seems Shevek and the syndicate will not challenge, because they seem entirely unaware of their existence. Here, perhaps, it becomes difficult to separate these characters’ ignorance of these relationships of domination from Le Guin’s; and it is important to remember

Levitas's claim that readers must attend to the "silences and inconsistencies" of utopias—to their absences as well as their presences.⁸² Where these places are represented fictionally their silences and inconsistencies are likely to reflect the author's prejudices or inconsistencies (which will, of course, also tell us about the social conditions in which they were produced). Thus, the place-based approach to utopia I develop here is inadequate unless ~~utilised~~utilized alongside more text-centric approaches to utopia. This is particularly the case when the place in question is fictional, but even where the place exists any articulation of it will always be partial and creative and thus open to various forms of textual analysis.

Despite Le Guin's undoubted commitment to anarchism and emancipation from patriarchy ~~and~~ oppression, Anarres and the narrative structure of *The Dispossessed* are marked by a number of "silences and inconsistencies." Samuel Delany and Tom Moylan have pointed to the persistence of the heteronormative nuclear family as a dominant and seemingly unchallenged form of social reproduction on Anarres (albeit with tolerance of bisexual polyamory, at least for men), despite the clear limits this places on the ability of women ~~and~~ queer ~~and~~ gender non-conforming subjects to increase their affective capacities, and to specific instances of sexism both on Anarres and in Le Guin's narrative.⁸³ These misogynist elements (of both Shevek and *The Dispossessed*) become particularly apparent through the description of a serious sexual assault Shevek commits on Urras (at a party he ejaculates—without permission—on Ve'a's dress).⁸⁴ While such an event could function as a clear warning against unambiguously celebrating Shevek as a hero, the narrative around it serves largely as an indictment of Urrasti culture rather than calling into question the extent to which misogyny on Anarres might have been

responsible. This means that Shevek is never made to come to terms with his abuse, and the episode can even be read as ~~humanising~~humanizing him, exacerbating the misfortune in Le Guin choosing a handsome male to be her “affect alien.”⁸⁵ After all, Ahmed’s affect aliens occupy positions of structural disadvantage in society: Shevek—however individually frustrated he may be—does not. Anarres has seemingly done away with white supremacy (or perhaps it was never an issue, though this seems unlikely given the colonial dynamics on Urras, and Le Guin can certainly be ~~criticised~~criticized for not tackling this⁸⁶), but patriarchy remains; and there is nothing to suggest that Shevek and his comrades ~~recognise~~recognize this. Furthermore, Shevek is frequently figured—by Le Guin, by other Anarresti, and by himself—as an individual enacting power-to rather than a dividual dependent upon those around him for power-with. As quoted above, Bedap, for example, associates Shevek’s “individual mind” with change (and ~~identifies~~ “the public” as the force preventing change); while~~st~~ Shevek speaks of his “own initiative” as “the only initiative I acknowledge”⁸⁷ when explaining why he travel~~led~~ed to Urras (he was actually persuaded to travel by his wife, Takver~~’s~~ and through his numerous intra-actions with Bedap).

This individualism is not simply a property of Anarres, but is ~~frequently~~frequently repeated through Le Guin’s narrative, which displays a tendency to privilege the individual over the collective rather than show them in a mutual intra-action. We never see the operation of Shevek’s revolutionary syndicate, for example,⁸⁸ although we are shown Shevek’s involvement in collective struggle on Urras, with the suggestion that this informs his actions on Anarres. Bedap, meanwhile, appears only occasionally (to “alienate” Shevek) before being rather brutally dispensed with: his “affect alienation” is

thoroughly ~~instrumentalised~~instrumentalized—we never learn ~~if-whether~~ his capacity to affect or be affected is increased. All of this means that Anarres—and *The Dispossessed*—at times repeat liberal-patriarchal tropes; and serves as a reminder of the importance of Jameson’s argument that utopian texts never fully escape the conditions of their production.

The question still remains, however: ~~is~~s Anarres an affective utopia? Any answer to this question can only ever be provisional: despite ~~the reader~~ enjoying a broader view than any single Anarresti citizen, ~~the~~s remains reliant on Le Guin to guide them, and there are many things they are not shown. (~~†~~This returns us to Massey’s definition of places s as collections of stories about a particular space: ~~w~~What stories are we *not* told? How might the place of Anarres be different if someone other than Le Guin “collected” these stories; or if Le Guin had “collected” these stories later in her life, when her views of gendered inequality had changed?). Thus, we return to the first aspect of Anarres’ s—and affective utopianism’s—double ambiguity. Anarres’ s status as a utopia is ambiguous (a fact complicated by its necessarily partial narration by Le Guin); and if it is a utopia, it is one constituted by the ambiguous intra-action of the good and the no. I am inclined to say that Anarres is not an affective utopia; ~~—~~or at least that it is not one at any point (in space and time) during the narrative of *The Dispossessed*: not because bad intra-actions remain prominent in its social ordering; but because they remain unchallenged. In this sense, I am inclined to agree with Tony Burns that *The Dispossessed* is best read as a novel about utopianism rather than one depicting a utopia (though my reasoning differs greatly from Burns’ s).⁸⁹ Anarres is certainly a place, and much of it is good; but it needs more affect aliens to ~~organise~~organize around their disaffected alienation and challenge

that which is bad if it is to become an affective utopia. A different telling of Anarres may provide us with this, however, but we can never fully separate any place from its creation through narrative.

Nonetheless, engaging actively with Anarres *does* provide the reader with an understanding of how utopia as developed in this article might function. As such, *The Dispossessed* remains a very useful book about utopianism. We see that places can be constituted through immanent intra-actions; and that it is possible for places to produce and be (re)produced by this power-with. In other words, by temporally and conceptually reading beyond the limits of the text (by imagining what happens once the novel leaves Anarres; and by applying perspectives or knowledges absent from the narrative) we can imagine how Anarres might become a utopia in the future.⁹⁰

<1>Conclusion

Through an engagement with a variety of political, social, and geographical theory; and with the society of Anarres as depicted in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, this article has rethought utopia as "the good place that is no place." It has drawn on understandings of place as a dynamic form constituted in time through the intra-action of bodies. It has suggested that these intra-actions are "good" when they nonhierarchically produce affective power-with; and that this "good" can be "ambiguously" enhanced by the articulation of oppressive relations of domination. Nonetheless, I have argued that we can only ever ambiguously assert whether any given place constitutes such a utopia, for information about power relations is necessarily partial and situated; even when we are "reading" a place from its outside (as I did with Anarres). I have also posited a

relationship between utopianism and utopia in which the former produces the latter affectively (and is then reproduced by it), rather than being oriented to a predetermined ideal vision. This takes us a long way from More's Utopia of 1516. And yet, at the same time it does not. Places change; and concepts change. We can go back to utopia, so long as we understand that utopia is a place ~~where~~ we have never been.

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<1>Notes

<unn>My thanks [go](#) to the Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Nottingham, where much of this research was conducted, ~~;~~ and to colleagues at the University of Sheffield, where I have also been working part-time. A great deal of thanks must also go to my two reviewers, whose highly constructive critiques have substantially improved the quality of this article. The argument developed in this article is being further developed in *Rethinking Utopia: Place, Power, Affect*, to be published by Routledge ~~in 2016~~ [\[AQ: UPDATE?\]](#).</unn>

Commented [DB3]: As above!

<Insert endnotes>

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1. Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), ~~15~~15~~FAQ: CITE PAGE NUMBER FOR THE QUOTATION.~~

2. I use "utopian studies" to refer to academic work explicitly providing a definition or interpretation of utopia or utopianism. In some cases this is the primary purpose of texts referenced; in others it is secondary to an application of "utopia(nism)" to a particular (set of) text(s) or practice(s).

3. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*,

trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971); John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2010).

4. David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

5. Jose Esteban Munoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: ~~University of~~ New York ~~University~~ Press, 2009), 29. Cf. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2007), 281–95; ~~Fredric Jameson~~, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009), 413; Maurice Blanchot, “The Proper Use of Science Fiction,” *Arena* 25/26 (2006): ~~140–141~~; ~~140–141~~; Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2014).

6. Lyman Tower Sargent, “The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited,” *Utopian Studies* 5, no. 2 (1994): 1–37; Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*. These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Ruth Levitas privileges utopia’s affirmative mode but views estrangement as a function of considerable importance. Lucy Sargisson argues that the presentation of both alternatives and estrangement must ~~both~~ be present; while ~~est~~ Moylan also values them ~~both~~, but positions estrangement as ontologically prior to affirmation. My own approach can be read as seeking to combine affirmation and estrangement (or alienation) *within* utopia-as-place. ~~Ruth Levitas~~ Levitas, *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Lucy Sargisson, *Fool’s Gold: Utopianism in the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Tom Moylan,

“Making the Present Impossible: On the Vocation of Utopian Science Fiction,” *Arena* 31 (2008): 79–109.

7. Ruth Levitas, *Concept of Utopia* (~~Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990~~Witney: Peter Lang, 2011)~~FAQ: PUBLISHING INFO NOW CORRECT?~~, 141.

Cf. Stephen Duncombe, “The Anarchist Geography of No-Place,” in *The Anarchist Turn*, ed. Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici, and Simon Critchley~~et al.~~ (London: Pluto, 2013), 145–57.

8. Jameson, *Archaeologies*~~ies~~ of the Future, xvi.

9. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*.

10. John P. Clark, “Anarchy and the Dialectic of Utopia,” in *Anarchism and Utopianism*, ed. Laurence Davis and Ruth Kinna (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 21.

11. Such approaches are re extremely useful; and I ~~utilise~~utilize them in reading *The Dispossessed*, below. My intention here is not to ~~criticize~~criticize individual applications of this approach; but to suggest that its predominance in utopian studies results in a sidelining of place. Disciplinary differences are undoubtedly of relevance here: many of the theorists discussed here are from literary backgrounds; or take a literature-inspired approach. It is perhaps also noteworthy that Levitas—who argues for detailed representations of alternative societies, even as she focuses on utopia’s function—is a sociologist; and that Harvey—who focuses on place—is a geographer.

12. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 52; cf. Levitas, *Utopia as Method*.

13. Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, 413.

14. ~~Ernst~~ Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* (~~Cambridge: MIT Press~~), ~~203~~; 1375–

76 ~~FAQ: CLARIFY CITATION? ARE YOU REFERENCING A SECOND
VERSION OF THE SAME WORK REFERENCED ABOVE IN NOTE 1?~~

Inasmuch as this is a quasi-Hegelian system, we can see “the end of history” as capitalism’s *Heimat*.

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15. Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopianism in the 1970s* (New York: Routledge, 1991), ~~7~~ ~~FAQ: CITE PAGE NUMBER FOR THE
QUOTATION.~~ I say inconsistent because at times Bammer names this process utopia.

16. Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 108.

17. Lisa Garforth, “No Intentions? Utopian Theory After the Future,” *Journal for Cultural Research* 13 (2009): 5–27.

18. Valérie Fournier, “Utopianism and the Cultivation of Possibilities: Grassroots Movements of Hope,” in *Utopia and Organization*, ed. Martin Parker (London: Blackwell, 2002), 192.

19. Ruth Kinna, “Anarchism and the Politics of Utopia,” in ~~Davis and Kinna,~~ *Anarchism and Utopianism*, ~~221–40~~ ~~ed. Ruth Kinna and Laurence Davis (Manchester:~~ ~~Manchester University Press, 2009).~~

20. Judith Suissa, “‘The Space Now Possible’: Anarchist Education as Utopian Hope,” ~~and~~ Uri Gordon, “Utopia in Contemporary Anarchism,” ~~both in~~ ~~Davis and~~ ~~Kinna,~~ *Anarchism and Utopianism*, ~~241–59 and 260–75~~ ~~ed. Ruth Kinna and Laurence~~

~~Davis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009). [AQ: PROVIDE PAGE-
NUMBERS FOR GORDON.], respectively.~~

21. Andy Robinson and Simon Tormey, "Utopias Without Transcendence? Post-Left Anarchy, Immediacy, and Utopian Energy," in *Globalization and Utopia: Critical Essays*, ed. Patrick Hayden and Chamsy El-Ojeili (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), ~~164. [AQ: CITE PAGE NUMBER FOR THE QUOTATION.],~~

22. Laurence Davis, "History, Politics, and Utopia: Toward a Synthesis of Social Theory and Practice," in *Existential Utopia: New Perspectives on Utopian Thought*, ed. Michael Marder and Patricia Vieira (New York: Continuum, 2012), ~~127–39.~~

23. ~~Uri~~ Gordon, "Utopia in Contemporary Anarchism.," ~~[AQ: CITE PAGE-
NUMBER FOR THE QUOTATION.], 260. in Anarchism and Utopianism, ed. Laurence Davis and Ruth Kinna (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).~~

24. Carissa Honeywell, "Utopianism and Anarchism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 12, no. 3 (2007): ~~239–54.~~

25. As critically ~~analysed~~analyzed in Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005).

26. Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*; cf. Massey's critical analyses of this position in *For Space* and *Space, Place, and Gender*.

27. J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing, 1516–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and*

Anti-Utopia in Modern Times (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987).

28. ~~G. W.~~ Leibniz, in H. G. Alexander, ed., *The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence: Together with Extracts from ~~Newton's~~Newton's "Principia" and "Opticks"* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Marcus Doel, *Poststructuralist Geographies: The Diabolical Art of Spatial Science* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999); Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*; ~~and~~ Massey, *For Space*.

29. ~~Karen~~ Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 33.

30. Cf. Doel, *Poststructuralist Geographies*, 120. This approach might be called "post-Euclidean," and so resonates with Ursula Le Guin's rejection of "~~e~~Euclidean utopianism" in "A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be," ~~In~~ *Dancing ~~on~~at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990). ~~80-100. [AQ: PROVIDE PAGE NUMBERS.]~~

31. Massey, *For Space*, 130.

32. Residents of Anarres consider it to be a planet and refer to Urras as the "moon." Cosmologically speaking, however, it seems likely that Anarres is the moon of Urras. See Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (London: Gollancz, 2006), 36.

33. Cf. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 36.

34. Cf. Bertrand Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, trans. Robert T. Tally Jr. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

35. ~~Winter Elliott, “Breaching Individual Walls: Individual Anarchy in *The Dispossessed*,” in *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed,”* ed. Laurence Davis and Peter Stilman (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2005)~~~~LAO:~~
~~CITE PAGE NUMBER FOR THE QUOTATION.~~~~emphasis added~~ Jennifer Rodgers, “Fulfillment as a Function of Time, or the Ambiguous Process of Utopia”, in Davis and Stilman, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed,”* 181-194.

36. Laurence Davis, “The Dynamic and Revolutionary Utopia of Ursula K. Le Guin,” in ~~Davis and Stilman~~, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed,”* 3–36.

37. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 48.

38. ~~This is the~~ epitaph on the gravestone of Odo, the anarchist theorist after whom Odonianism is named. ~~Dispossessed~~ *Ibid.*, 74. Thus, Shevek’s “revolution” in temporal ontology and its creation of place resonates with this understanding of change as (“eternal”) return: he re-introduces something that had been present at the founding of Anarres. For more on the temporal politics of *The Dispossessed*, see Davis, “Dynamic and Revolutionary Utopia of Ursula K. Le Guin,” ~~as well as~~ Tony Burns, “Science and Politics in *The Dispossessed: Le Guin and the ‘Science Wars’*”; Jennifer Rodgers, “Fulfillment as a Function of Time, or the Ambiguous Process of Utopia”; and Ellen M. Rigsby, “Time and the Measure of the Political Animal”; all in ~~Davis and Stilman~~, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed,”* 195–218, 181–94, and 167–80, respectively.

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39. This first “ambiguity” (whether Anarres is or is not a utopia) is articulated by Avery Plaw, while~~est~~ the second form of ambiguity (how Anarres is constituted by opposing forces) is discussed by Dan Sabia. See Avery Plaw, “Empty Hands: Communication, Pluralism, and Community in Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*”; and Dan Sabia, “Individual and Community in Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed*,” both in [Davis and Stilman, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed”*, 283–304](#) ~~IAQ: PROVIDE PAGE NUMBERS FOR PLAW.~~ and 111–28, respectively.

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40. Sargent, “Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited,” 9.

41. ~~J.-C.~~ Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society*; Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*; Chris Ferns, *Narrating Utopia* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 31–66; Fernando Gómez, *Good Places and Non-places in Colonial Mexico: The Figure of Vasco de Quiroga* (Lanham, ~~Md.~~: University Press of America, 2001); Le Guin, “Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cool Place to Be”; Clark, “Anarchy and the Dialectic of Utopia.”

42. There is, of course, a near endless parade of anti-utopian texts ~~which-that~~ argue that any attempt to realize a utopia will result in dystopia. For utopian versions of this critique, see Davis, “History, Politics, and Utopia”; Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism*; and Le Guin, “Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cool Place to Be.”

43. Deleuze is by no means the only thinker to draw a distinction between ethics and morality, of course. While~~est~~ space (and my [lack of] expertise) prevents me from offering a fuller discussion of this issue, it is worth noting that Le Guin herself undertakes

such a task in “Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cool Place to Be.” What she calls “ethics” refers to a patriarchally imposed, coercive set of laws and can thus be related to Deleuze-Spinoza’s morality; while ~~est~~ (feminine) “morality” is closer to (but by no means identical with) Deleuze-Spinoza’s ethics inasmuch as it is contingent, flexible, and empowering. Tony Burns undertakes a fuller analysis of this issue, arguing that Le Guin’s morality has significant resonances with Alasdair Macintyre’s “virtue ethics”⁴⁴; and that her account of the relationship between ethics and morality can be compared ~~to~~ with the approach taken by Hegel and Habermas. See Tony Burns, *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature: Ursula K. Le Guin and “The Dispossessed”* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008), 190–214. Deleuze’s reading of Nietzsche (for whom going beyond Good and Evil did not mean going beyond good and bad) is also central to his reading of Spinoza.

44. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 71.

45. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle, “Introduction: Somewhere Between the Signifying and the Sublime,” in *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience*, ed. Marie Thompson and Ian Biddle (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 9.

46. ~~In~~ Chris Wallace, “Commons Sense,” *BOMB*, August 18, 2010, accessed March 4, 2014, ~~online at~~ <http://bombmagazine.org/article/4424>.

47. Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority, and Mystery* (New York: HarperCollins, 1989).

48. Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 83. For more on this relationship

the Collège de France, 1975–76, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2004).

58. Cf. Franco “Bifo” Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy* (New York: Semiotext[e], 2009).

59. An affective understanding of dystopia (“the bad place”) is one that sees it as place (re)produced by and (re)producing ethically bad relationships.

60. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 96.

61. I appropriate this term from Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2007), 32.

62. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 191. This argument resonates with that made by ~~Joreen~~ (Jo Freeman) ~~Joreen~~ in “The Tyranny of Structurelessness”; and rebutted by Cathy Levine in “The Tyranny of Tyranny,” both in *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-feminist Reader*, ed. Dark Star (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 68–76 and 77–82, respectively. I find “tyranny of habit” preferable because it does not disavow the problem, but ~~nor-neither~~ does it conflate nonhierarchy with structurelessness (and thus structure with hierarchy).

63. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 101.

64. ~~Le Guin, *Dispossessed*~~ Ibid., 1.

65. On the imagery of walls in *The Dispossessed*, see Everett L. Hamner, “The Gap in the Wall: Partnership, Physics, and Politics in *The Dispossessed*,” in Davis and Stilman, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed”*, 219–32. For the “strategic” necessity of borders to protect the cosmologies of the structurally disadvantaged (~~I~~indigenous people, for example), see the important critique of Doreen

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Massey in Noel Castree, "Differential Geographies: Place, Indigenous Rights, and 'Local' Resources," *Political Geography* 23, no. 2 (2004): [133–67](#).

66. Donna R. White has argued that Anarres should be read as a dystopia: *Dancing with Dragons: Ursula K. Le Guin and the Critics* (Columbia, [S.C.](#): Camden House, 1999).

67. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 143–44.

68. [Le Guin, *Dispossessed*](#)[Ibid.](#), 144.

69. If space permitted, it would be a worthwhile task to consider the characters Salas and Tirin here too. Both of them produced art that was deemed "anti-Odonian" (the reader is not given considerable detail, but the suggestion is that their works articulated potentially productive tensions) and felt the power of Anarresti discipline: Salas is denied opportunities to compose through his work postings, whilest Tirin suffers a nervous breakdown and is admitted to an asylum.

70. Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 39.

71. This process of blaming affect aliens can clearly be seen in Mark Fisher's essay "Exiting the Vampire Castle," [North Star, November 22, 2013](#), accessed March 2, 2014, ~~online at~~ <http://www.thenorthstar.info/?p=11299>.

72. [Le Guin, *Dispossessed*](#), 144.

73. Ahmed, "Happy Objects," 50.

74. Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 196.

75. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* ends with Shevek (having invented the ansible and insisted that it be held in common among all known planets) returning to Anarres with the Hainish ambassador Ketho; both of them determined to “unbuild walls” (288) as members of a revolutionary syndicate seeking to return a sense of utopianism to Anarres. It is left to the reader to imagine what happens to them, but Le Guin herself has noted that “it’s quite possible that both Shevek and Ketho will be killed on arrival by an angry mob . . . [or] that Shevek’s specific plans and hopes for his people will come to little or nothing.” Ursula K. Le Guin, “A Response, by Ansible, from Tau Ceti,” in Davis and Stilman, *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed,”* 308. ~~140~~ PAGE NUMBER NOW CORRECT TO CITE THE QUOTE?! Yet, if this is the case, reading Le Guin’s other novels set in the same universe suggests that their failure was not in vain, for in these it is revealed that Shevek’s ansible is integral to the functioning of the “Ekumen,” an anarchistic alliance of planets founded by the Hainish. ~~Ursula K. Le Guin, “A Response, by Ansible, from Tau Ceti,” in *New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin’s “The Dispossessed.”*~~

76. Ahmed, “Happy Objects,” 50; Clark, “Anarchy and the Dialectic of Utopia,” 9. For more on dissonance, harmony, and utopia, see David Bell, “What Is This That Stands Before Me? Dissonance and Utopia,” March 22, 2012, accessed September 9, 2015, online at <https://nomadicutopianism.wordpress.com/2012/03/22/what-is-this-that-stands-before-me-dissonance-and-utopia/>. Le Guin uses a similar metaphor in *The Dispossessed*, referring to the ‘noise’ of a stream as ‘a ceaseless harmony composed of disharmonies.’, 156.

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77. David Eden, *Autonomy: Capitalism, Class, and Politics* (Farnham, U.K.: Ashgate, 2012), 240.
78. Wilde, *Soul of Man Under Socialism*, 27.
79. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Continuum, 2004), 389.
80. Massey, *For Space*; contra Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*.
81. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* trans. Graham Burchill and Hugh Tomlinson (London: Verso, 1994), 45; cf. Gordon, “Utopia in Contemporary Anarchism.”
82. [Levitas](#), *Utopia as Method*, 153.
83. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 87–114; Samuel Delany, “To Read *The Dispossessed*,” in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, [rev. ed.](#) (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2009), [105–65](#), [\[AQ: PROVIDE PAGE NUMBERS \(105–65?\).\]](#).
84. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 200.
85. The use [of](#) sexual abuse as a plot device has recently been the subject of considerable criticism. See, for example, Anna Little, “#NoRapeOnReign: When Sexual Violence Is a Plot Device,” [Ms. Magazine blog](#), October 24, 2014, accessed September 4, 2015, [online at http://msmagazine.com/blog/2014/10/24/norapeonreign-when-sexual-violence-is-a-plot-device/](#); and Caity Goerke, “Using Rape as a Plot Device,” [The F Word](#), March 8, 2013, accessed September 15, 2015, [online at](#)

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<http://www.feminisms.org/5844/using-rape-as-a-plot-device/>.

⁸⁶ See Edward K. Chan, *The Racial Horizon of Utopia: Unthinking the Future of Race in Late Twentieth-Century American Utopian Novels* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016) for a fascinating discussion with the (productive) failure of utopian literature to engage with racialized identity. He engages with utopian works that, unlike *The Dispossessed*, explicitly grapple with racial identity.

87. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*, 67.

88. Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*, 107.

89. Burns, *Political Theory, Science Fiction, and Utopian Literature*.

90. The attentive reader will note that in this I am functioning as the reader-subject of Levitas's "utopia as method": *The Dispossessed* has educated my desire for a better world!