



**FACULTY OF SCIENCE AND LETTERS**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**ENL8004 GRADUATION PROJECT**

**STUDENT'S NUMBER:** 1302020011  
**STUDENT'S NAME:** Murat Kabak  
**SUPERVISOR'S NAME:** Asst. Prof. Ayşem Seval  
**DATE WORK SUBMITTED:** 26 May 2017  
**TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT:** Undoing the Walls: On the Possibility of Actualizing an  
Ideal State in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*  
**WORD LENGTH:** 3453

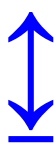
**Statement:**

I confirm that this assignment is all my own work and conforms to the code on Citing Sources and Avoidance of Plagiarism.

**Signed:**

**Date:** 26 May 2017

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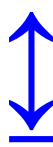
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*Thesis statement:* This paper aims to question the possibility of achieving a utopian society in Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. The anarchist and capitalist political structures of the binary planetary system in Le Guin's novel are analysed with reference to Slavoj Žižek's concept of "objective violence" discussed in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*.

- I. An outline of Slavoj Žižek's concepts of objective and subjective violence
- II. To understand why the anarchist society Anarres is called "ambiguous", the opening paragraph of the novel is analysed: "There was a wall ... Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on ... It enclosed the universe, leaving Anarres outside, free" (1:1-2).
  - A. The first comment is on the functions of the wall: both protective and imprisoning at the same time
  - B. The second comment includes Bülent Somay's view on the presence of the wall in the anarchist society
- III. The protagonist's experience in Anarres – In this section, the focus is to discuss the existence and the consequences of objective violence in Anarres
  - A. Examples of objective violence in Anarres – The position of "nuchnibi" in Anarres – The victims of systemic violence and the lowest members of the social organisation. A discussion of excerpts from Chapter 5.
  - B. Shevek's disillusionment with the ideological orthodoxy of Anarresti anarchism – A discussion of excerpts from Chapter 6.
- IV. A discussion of the objective violence in Urras – In this section, the focus is to discuss the existence and the consequences of objective violence in Urras

- A. An illustration of Shevek's disillusionment with the capitalist social organisation. Examples from Chapter 5
  - B. On Shevek's encounter with the economically disadvantaged in Urras – Examples from Chapter 9
- V. Commentary
- A. A comparison of objective violence examples in Anarresti and Urrasti societies
  - B. How the novel ends with a third alternative to negate the Anarresti and Urrasti social organisations and emphasises the importance of individual's endless search for an ideal state

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Kabak 1

Undoing the Walls:

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### On the Possibility of Actualizing an Ideal State in Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*

1/2" → This paper aims to offer a political analysis of Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*, with reference to Slavoj Žižek's concept of "objective violence" discussed in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. In the novel, the central character Shevek is on a self-appointed mission to establish a healthier relationship between two planets, Anarres and Urras, by breaking down the walls that are separating them. In that sense, the novel is centred around one man's search for actualizing an ideal state. The main aim of this paper is to question the possibility of achieving a utopian society by illustrating the existence of objective violence in the binary planetary system in Le Guin's novel and discuss these examples in relation to the binary opposite political systems in *The Dispossessed* (hereafter abbreviated as *TD*), anarchism and capitalism. In his mission to break down the walls, the central character Shevek acts as a mirror, revealing the inherent problems of social and political organisations in both societies, as well as being a self-reflecting subject who is on a journey of actualizing a personal utopia.

1/2" → In his critique of late-capitalism, Žižek makes a distinction between objective and subjective violence. While the latter is used to designate seemingly sudden outburst of violence, the former refers to a form of violence that is inherent in political and economic systems (14). The subjective violence can take the form of riots, civil disorders or acts of terrorism. As opposed to subjective violence, Žižek argues, in objective violence propagated by late-capitalism, there is no "clearly identifiable agent" (1) who conducts the violent act. This form of violence is inherent in political and economic systems and cannot be attributed to "concrete individuals ... [It] is purely "objective", systemic, anonymous" (13). Although Žižek defines

The author only cites the page number as he mentions the author's name.

Modification of the quotation with the square brackets

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Citation of a paraphrase

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## Works cited

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Selection from a collection of short stories

Note that the works cited list is put into alphabetical order by the authors' names

Davis, Laurence. "The Dynamic and Revolutionary Utopia of Ursula K. Le Guin". *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed*. Ed. Laurence Davis and Peter G. Stillman. Lexington, 2005, pp. 3-36.

Le Guin, Ursula K. "The Day Before the Revolution." *The Wind's Twelve Quarters*. Bantam, 1976, pp. 260-77.

---. *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*. Avon, 1975. Book with one author

Somay, Bülent. *The View from the Masthead: Journey Through Dystopia Towards an Open-ended Utopia*. Istanbul Bilgi UP, 2010.

Tunick, Mark. "The Need for Walls: Privacy, Community, and Freedom in *The Dispossessed*."

*The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed*. Ed. Laurence Davis and Peter G. Stillman. Lexington, 2005, pp. 129-147.

Since Tunick's article is published in a collection of essays, page numbers of the article that you are citing should be indicated

Žižek, Slavoj. *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. 2nd ed., Picador, 2009. A second or subsequent edition