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visitor from Earth is told:

Here on Amazonia, for possibly the first time, we can contemplate a true love between the sexes. No longer does one economically dominate the other. No longer is one at the mercy of the other, because of inferior laws. Both are equal. And on Whiteaway,

Sexual relations—which have begun at puberty—continue both inside the family and outside it, but mostly outside it. Whiteaway has two explanations for this. "Jealousy," they say for the first explanation, and for the second, "Why not?"

### Short People

**I**N THE ANARCHIST-FEMINIST future, the children are the apples of their collective's eye, glowing with physical and spiritual health in a non-sexist, sexually-free atmosphere designed to enhance their fullest potential. Their "schools" have little resemblance to any present-day educational institutions. They are full members of their communities, respected by adults for their contributions as well as their needs.

Ecotopian children attend open-air schools, spending less than an hour a day in class. They participate each day in the work of the community, in factories and gardens, where they need to use concepts in geometry and physics, do complex calculations and bring to bear their considerable skills in carpentry.

Nobody has to do it for very long, unless he likes the work. The Community Management or Block Committee... make rotating lists. The disagreeable work postings or dangerous ones like the mercury mines and mills are normally for one half year only.

When only the necessary work is done and shared equally, a more leisurely pace of life becomes possible. Jackrabbits explain:

After we dumped the jobs telling people what to do, counting money and moving it about, making people do what they don't want or hating them for doing what they want we have lots of people to work.

On Amazonia, where work settings (although worker-controlled) remain more rigid and set apart, the visitor from Earth notes with surprise that "the enterprises tend to be just as concerned with conditions of work as they are with profits."

As well as being concerned for each other, the inhabitants of several of these future worlds exhibit a high degree of ecological consciousness. They try to grow food and to manufacture goods without destroying the soil or the sea or the air; they seem to have learned the folly of uncontrolled natural resources.

In Ecotopia, people who want to build a wood structure "must first arrange to go out to a forest camp and do forest service—a period of labor during which... they are supposed to contribute enough to the growth of new trees to replace the wood they are about to consume." The example is

including a description of the transition from authoritarian centralized capitalism...

In the original plans for Anarres, decentralization was an essential element.

Odo, the major theoretician:

had no intention of trying to de-urbanize civilization. Though she suggested that the natural limit to the size of a community lay in its dependence on its own immediate region for essential

What of individuals who don't or won't fit into the society? All the authors take a creative crack at this issue. Here's The Dispossessed. Well, he moves on. The others get tired of him, you know. They make fun of him, or they get rough with him, beat him up; in a small community, he might agree to take his name off the meal ticket, to be last to cook and eat all by himself; that is humiliating.

Marge Piercy's handling of violent acts in *Woman on the Edge of Time* has some authoritarian elements.

First off, we ask if person wants to take responsibility for the act... then we work on healing. We try to help to that never again will person do a thing person doesn't mean to do... [If it was intentional] then you work out a sentence, maybe exile, remote labor... you, your victim, and your judge work it out (for the family of your victim)... the second time someone uses violence, we give up... we don't want to watch each other or to imprison each other... we aren't willing to live with people who use violence... we execute them.

In Ecotopia there are small prisons rather than large ones. Prisoners participate in the general life of society, holding jobs with ordinary pay and rights. They are confined at other times, with husbands, wives or lovers if they choose. The underlying theme:

In the American system prisons were training grounds for crime. Humane policies give inmates time and opportunity to develop noncriminal modes of life.

The philosophy of anti-authoritarian individual responsibility is fully developed in *The Dispossessed*. A conversation between two characters:

"Listen, wasn't it Odo who said that where there's property, there's theft?... and to make a thief, make an owner, to create a crime, create laws."

"Nobody owns anything to rob. If you want things, you take them from the depository. As for violence... would you murder me? And if you felt like it, would a law against it stop you? Coercion is the least efficient means of obtaining order."

### Keeping Watch

**A**LL THESE SOCIETIES MUST contend with hostility from other worlds or dangers even closer to home. Some have developed secret, powerful weapons which are trained on their enemies; in *Woman on the Edge of Time* every individual must do a stint at the Front where war is waged interminably.

Where on earth do all these stories leave us? We've checked out our ideas in "concrete" situations, followed our intuitions through to logical conclusions, imagined how we'd changed things if we were writing the future.

Science fiction doesn't give us a complete picture. There are some areas that leave us quite unsettled. Several books describe a need for coercion in work distribution; none of the authors successfully outlines a method for dealing with extreme anti-social behaviour. The militarism in most of the books is disturbing.

There isn't enough historical detail in science fiction to connect us from here to there. But, when all is said and done, it is our future we're working on. Imagination at the very least reminds us of our goals. Let's give the last word to Odo, talking about Anri, a young woman in her House:

Anri had grown up in Odonom Houses, born to the Revolution, a true daughter of anarchy. And so quiet and free and beautiful a child, enough to make you cry when you thought: this is what we worked for, this is what we want, this is it, here she is, alive, the kind, lovely future.



In *The Canbe Collective*, Patience and Dandelion dream up a unique idea for building a play dome which involves the entire collective in serious discussion and decision-making. As the two young people pursue their plan they have full access to the information and distribution network of their world.

Toys are not big items in Whiteaway or Matopossett, where children participate in the life of their community, soaking up its values. And from *The Dispossessed*:

A child free from the guilt of ownership and the burden of economic competition will grow up with the will to do what needs doing and the capacity for joy in doing it.

### Appealing Work

**E**VEN IN THE FUTURE, PEOPLE have to work, although the distinctions between work and play have been significantly reduced. Much effort is put into making work appealing and integrating it into community life.

When work becomes pleasant people can choose what they do, who does "the dirty work"? In Matopossett, Jackrabbits tell Connie, "Fasure [this is all automated]. Who wants to split pillows?" On Anarres, where they don't have the technology to automate the disagreeable work, it's shared:

especially exciting since Ecotopia has been established through revolution in Washington, Oregon and Northern California. (Saving all those redwoods and Douglas Firs!)

Technology is not synonymous with capitalism and destructive industrialism in many of these stories. Le Guin's character in *The New Atlantis* knows his Bookchin:

We could completely decentralize industry and agriculture. Technology could serve life instead of serving capital. We could each run our own life. The State is a machine. We could unplug the machine, now.

The major use of technology is to liberate people from the work one wants to do. And computer technology is ingeniously used for information storage and access in almost every book described.

### Anarchist Blueprint

The network was not to be run from the top down. There was to be no controlling center, no capital, no establishment for the self-perpetuating machinery of bureaucracy and the dominance drive of individuals seeking to become captains, bosses, chiefs of state.

### The Dispossessed

All the systems of Anarres are worked out in detail for the eager student of anarchism,

food and power, she intended that all communities be connected by communication and transportation networks to that goods and ideas could get where they were wanted, and the administration of things could work with speed and ease, and no community should be cut off from change or interchange.

A similar structure prevails in Matopossett, where the informality and extent of people's participation astounds Connie:

Twenty-five or thirty people sat around an oblong table arguing about cement, zinc, tin, copper, platinum, steel, gravel, limestone, and things she could not identify. Many of them seemed to be women... they ranged from sixteen to extreme old age... they spoke in ordinary voices and did not seem to be specifying...

"We have a five-minute limit on speeches... 'This is your government?'"

"It's the planning council for our township."

"Are they elected?"

"Crossed by lot. You do it for a year: three-month with the rep before you and three with the person replacing you and six alone."

The resulting communities are not mainly rural, but not sprawling cities either. In *Shockwave Rider* by John Brunner, the anarchist city Precipice appears like a jewel in a sea of horror. "It's like a village with the city impit in it." In fact, the description of these cities of the future would seduce you into reading further, if the treatment of sex roles had not already captured your imagination.

Despite the complexity of matters to coordinate, attention to process and consensus decision-making are priorities. *The Canbe Collective* describes meetings in vivid detail and here is the reporter in Ecotopia:

A meeting has no formal agenda; instead it opens with a voicing of "concerns" by many participants. As these are discussed general issues begin to take shape. But there are no Robert's Rules of Order, no motions, no votes—instead, a gradual ventilation of feelings; some personal antagonisms worked through and a gradual, consensual focusing on what needs to be done.

Not so on Whiteaway. A fiercely-female-focused society, its inhabitants are indoctrinated under a static coded system which naturally produces their "characteristic independence, dissatisfaction, suspicion and a tendency toward a rather irritable solipsism." The book's feminism is apparently not consistent with an anti-authoritarian structure.

Of course, it is not rosy in the future. Le Guin's Odo complains: "favoritism, elitism, leader-worship, they crept back and cropped out everywhere." And the first settlers on Anarres were aware that "unavoidable centralization was a lasting trait to be countered by lasting vigilance."