Walls of the Tongue: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Ursula K. Le Guin's <u>The Dispossessed</u>

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Introduction

"Good" science fiction, if one may be allowed to propose such a definition, is that which transports its readers out of the banal and ordinary, into the world of the *what if?* and the alien. Writers of good science fiction naturally differ in their implementation of this, but some have opted to employ the more sophisticated tools of linguistics, constructing exotic alien languages or fragments thereof. Le Guin, however, has taken this a step further in <u>The Dispossessed</u>, adding to her repertoire of tools not only linguistics, but *sociolinguistics*.

The field of sociolinguistics concerns itself with "the study of language and linguistic behavior as influenced by social and cultural factors" (American Heritage Dictionary). Modern sociolinguists hold to the idea that a true understanding of language usage cannot be achieved when abstracted from its social context. Unearthing the influences of society on language use is thus the driving force for all areas within sociolinguistics, which include variation, language & power, gender issues, language contact, and language acquisition.

Walter Meyers reveals that Le Guin is no stranger to linguistic (and pseudo-linguistic) concepts. Her novels and short stories deal with the real and fantastic ideas of etymology (The Left Hand of Darkness), folk etymology ("The New Atlantis"), "therolinguistics" (her coined term for the supposed language of animals; "The Author of the Acacia Seeds and Other Extracts from the *Journal of the Association of Therolinguistics*"), *kinesics* (communicative motion; "Mazes"), and a "tactile language" ("The Word for World is Forest"). Le Guin's generally-accurate use of phonological and syntactic terms in The Dispossessed (*fricative*, p. 138; *intonation*, p. 197; *telegraphic*, p. 154) also suggests at least a passing familiarity with linguistics. It must be noted, however, that Le Guin is not immune to a certain pervasive sociolinguistic myth, as illustrated in this excerpt from The Dispossessed:

> Spelling and grammar fell by the wayside; it read like Efor talking...It
> was the verbal mode of the Nioti, past and future rammed into one highly
> charged, unstable present tense.
>
> (p. 201)

The pseudo-linguistic concept of a "highly charged" and "unstable" present tense aside, this statement reveals an adherence to the popular yet untrue belief that dialects are "ungrammatical." Granted, the "birdseed paper" mentioned in the story may violate prescriptive norms in its prose, but all spoken human language (e.g. as employed by the servant, Efor) is rule-governed. An awareness of this fact regarding dialects is essential to understanding sociolinguistic analyses. A modern example of this dialect grammaticality is the AAE (African-American English) form of "habitual *be*" (Fromkin, et al.). Contrary to notions that this is an "ungrammatical" usage and can be freely substituted for *is/are/am*, the *be* form is limited to aspects of habituality by the AAE grammar. It would therefore be ungrammatical to answer the

question, "What are you doing right now?" with, "We be running," since the habitual *be* does not fit with the simple progressive aspect of that sentence. In answering the question, "What are you doing every day?" however, "We be running" is perfectly grammatical within AAE, as it denotes a repeated or habitual action. It is to be expected that the Nioti dialect in A-Io is also rule-governed. A deeper analysis of this city dialect reveals, despite Le Guin's attitude toward its grammaticality, that "Niotic" indeed exhibits rule-governed behavior (see **Appendix D**).

We begin our analysis of Le Guin's utilization of sociolinguistic concepts in The Dispossessed with the communal planet of Anarres.

Anarres

Social Analysis

In the first half of the 20th century, Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Whorf developed a new way of evaluating the relationship between language and society. While sociolinguistics focuses mainly on the influence of society in language use, these linguists proposed that the structure of one's language actually aids in shaping the thought processes of that individual ("Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," Wikipedia). This idea is known as the *Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*, an extreme version of which guides the development of "Newspeak" in George Orwell's 1984. The idea that language controls individual thought is also a fundamental element in The Dispossessed. When the Odonians settle on Anarres, they invent for themselves "Pravic," a new language that, as Meyers notes, "intentionally embodies the principles of the new society" (p. 204).

Perhaps the most telling feature of Pravic is its aversion to singular possessive

pronouns. Although the first stages in their language development include such forms as "my blanket" and "my father," the Anarresti are taught at a young age in their communal upbringing to say "the blanket I use" and "the father." Use of *my, your, his,* or *her* is reserved for emphasis and is often derogatory, as the pronouns imply a sense of private property ("propertarianism"), which is odious to a system of anarchism. Although this absence is a deliberately-introduced feature, such constructions as "the hand hurts me" (p. 58) are not entirely foreign to natural languages: In German, for instance, *die Hand tut mir weh* ("**the** hand is doing hurt to me") is an appropriate and grammatical way to express pain in one's hand, although the influence of English has led to the acceptance of *meine Hand tut weh* ("**my** hand is doing hurt"). This lack of singular possessives in the synthesized Pravic language, however, reflects the concept of mutual ownership, and Le Guin exploits this liberally throughout The Dispossessed. For example, Shevek's daughter, Sadik, tells her father that he can "share the handkerchief I use" (p. 316). Like a good young Odonian, she also refers to Takver as "the mother" and her bed as "the bed I sleep in" (p. 325). Shevek, likewise, is taken aback by Mitis's assertion that when he goes to work for Sabul, Shevek will become "his man" (p. 58). Finally, Rulag denotes Shevek's and Bedap's group as "your syndicate" (p. 355) to express her disgust with what she views as Urrasti propertarianism.

The conventions (or lack thereof) for greetings and titles are also highly significant, as Pravic lacks what Wolfram calls *address forms* (p. 84). There are no forms of "sir" or "ma'am," as there exists no concept of status or class in the Anarresti society. To introduce oneself, an Odonian simply offers forth his/her unique, gender-neutral, 2-syllable, computer-assigned name. If one is inclined to employ a title other than a name, the solidarity-enhancing *ammar* ("brother/sister") will suffice. Shevek even uses this term in addressing an otter on Urras with whom he feels some sort of

connection (p. 152). For more specific relationships, the Anarresti still "officially" employ somewhat broad terms. As noted on page 47, the terms *mamme* or *tadde* denote any female or male adults who act as parental figures for a child. Bedap, for example, is called "tadde" by Shevek's daughter Pilun (p. 361), despite the fact that he has no part in begetting her. Such loosely-defined labels are indicative of the sense of solidarity in the Odonian society: No one person owns another. Children are raised in communal boarding schools, sexually mature individuals copulate with whomever they choose, and "partners" are free to leave their relationships if they so desire.

The Anarresti are, however, human, and humans naturally form attachments. These they express by modifying individuals' names through the addition of diminutive /i/ suffixes (e.g. "Sadik" → "Sadiki," p. 315) or through clipping (e.g. "Shevek" → "Shev," p. 240; "Tirin" → "Tir," p. 331; "Bedap" → "Dap," p. 361). One wonders if Farigv, the creator of Pravic, would approve of these personal modifications given that, in the Odonian ideal, "speech is sharing – a cooperative art" (p. 29).

Another indicator of the intentional shaping of the Pravic language is its absence of words for concepts abhorrent to Odonianism. To the Anarresti, the Iotic words "prison," "slave," "bet," "moral," and "business" are as foreign as the ideas themselves. How they deal with such disagreeable words and concepts differs within the society. Some are embarrassed and disgusted:

> "The guards had weapons. The prisoners did not," the teacher said. He spoke with the violence of one forced to say the detestable, and embarrassed by it.
>
> (p. 35)

Others utilize it for humor's sake, as with Tirin's insistence that someone "bay *(buy)*

me for just a little *money*" (p. 59). Harsh epithets are also derived from descriptions of the Urrasti, such as "propertarian" and "profiteer," the latter described by Shevek as "the most contemptuous word in his vocabulary" (p. 224). All expletives used on Anarres are of Iotic origin, since "Pravic was not a good swearing language. It is hard to swear when sex is not dirty and blasphemy does not exist" (p. 258). The fact that Pravic lacks any *taboo words* (Wolfram, p. 61) of its own is a purposeful act on Le Guin's part to impart a sense of openness and frankness to the depiction of Odonian society.

A final relevant social factor in the language on Anarres is the manipulation of definitions and connotations. Pravic is designed so that the same word means both "work" and "play" (p. 92). The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis applies here in full force: Without a linguistic distinction, the Anarresti will conceivably fail to form a conceptual distinction between *work* and *play*, a convenient and perhaps necessary arrangement for a communal economy whose existence depends on the compliant diligence of its constituents. The propagandized usage of the words "healthy" and "sick" to respectively describe Anarresti and Urrasti societies has also produced an unintended effect: The overuse of the words "sickness" and "disease" in describing Urras has caused the concept of *sickness* itself to be semantically bound up with the abhorrent Urrasti society. An Odonian falling ill therefore feels shame because he/she cannot disassociate *disease* from *Urras*. In Le Guin's creation, the minds of the Anarresti are thus controlled by their language.

Individual Analysis

In addition to the broader social factors of language, Le Guin crafts the speech of certain Anarresti individuals to portray aspects of their personalities. In a sense,

she provides these characters with *idiolects* (Fromkin, et al., p. 445) appropriate to their traits. One of these individuals is Desar, the mathematician who never produces anything but tongue-tied, stammering, telegraphic speech. His manner of speaking creates a sense of distance and accentuates his "genuine indifference" (p. 262). Shevek eventually realizes the presence of an "element of pure malice in Desar's personality" (p. 263), a trait perhaps hinted at by Le Guin's description of his speech.

The other individual on Anarres who exhibits at least signs of a unique idiolect is the physicist Sabul. He is the only character whose speech is consistently described as "growling" (pp. 103, 104, 114, 116). What Le Guin may be attempting to accomplish here is twofold. First, it is possible that Sabul's "growl" is descriptive of his voice quality. As an old "woodrasp of a man" (p. 104), his voice would naturally acquire a coarser sound. However, his existence as the only "growler" on Anarres also serves to highlight his belligerent ill-suitedness to Odonian society. His surly tone seems out of place in the frank speech of the Anarresti. Despite his residence on Anarres he is, in Takver's words, merely an Odo-spouting "profiteer" (p. 238).

Urras

Social Analysis

We now turn our attention to Urras, specifically the country of A-Io, the antithesis of Anarres. In contrast to the relatively "flat" structure of dialects in synthesized Pravic, the natural language of Iotic exhibits styles, sociolects, regional dialects, gender language issues, and taboo words – material on which sociolinguistic studies thrive. It is important to note here the difference between *style, dialect,* and

sociolect:

style: One of the speech varieties used by an individual; different speech styles tend to correlate with such factors as audience, occasion, degree of formality, etc.

dialect: A variety of the language associated with a particular regional or social group.

sociolect: A dialect defined on the basis of a social grouping, such as a social class or ethnic group, as opposed to a dialect defined primarily on the basis of region. (source: Wolfram)

Some sources make use of the terms *regiolect* or *regionalect* to denote a dialect associated with a particular regional group. However, we will simply utilize the term *regional dialect* to distinguish a regional variety from a sociolect.

Iotic, unlike Pravic, exhibits different styles of speech. The "polite style," in whose form Shevek makes his first real contact with spoken Iotic, involves addressing the other party in the third person. Thus the doctor confuses Shevek by asking, "Is he sure he didn't get hurt?" (pp. 6-7), and Shevek's room on Urras is referred to as "his" (p. 23). The Ioti are also sure to address him as "sir" and "doctor," much to his consternation. Through the inclusion of these forms, Le Guin illustrates the power structure inherent in the society of A-Io, as demonstrated by their need to show deference for certain people. Shevek even notes that "you cannot say good morning without knowing which of you is 'superior' to the other, or trying to prove it" (p. 346).

Another manifestation of the Ioti power structure lies in the presence of a sociolect spoken by the "Nioti" (p. 193), the lower-class city dwellers. "Niotic" is characterized by both phonological ("the shift of sound values," p. 193) and syntactic differences from standard Iotic. Some users are able to *code-switch* (move "back

and forth between two languages or dialects within the same sentence or discourse,"
Fromkin, et al.) between Niotic and Iotic. A closer analysis of Niotic can be found
in **Appendix D**, but suffice it to say that this sociolect is stigmatized, as it is
associated with the prose of the sensationalistic "birdseed" newspapers read by the
urban working class. Le Guin also hints at the existence of another type of soci-
olect, manifested namely by an upper-class "drawl." This drawl and its associated
intonational patterns are utilized by Vea, Pae, and Oiie (p. 197), all of whom are
members of a higher social class in A-Io.

Also alluded to in <u>The Dispossessed</u> is the existence of regional dialects specific
to rural areas in A-Io. Le Guin notes that the character of Atro, an elderly Ioti
physicist whose family owns a considerable amount of land in a rural region of
the country, exhibits "provincial turns of speech, archaisms to which he clung with
pride" (p. 141). The mention of Atro's pride in his dialect leads us to two possible
conclusions: Either such regionalisms are not stigmatized like the Niotic sociolect,
or the aristocratic status of Atro's family allows him to use such forms without
fear of stigma. In any case, the presence of this regional dialect in A-Io furthers the
characterization of Urras as the antithesis of Anarres, a planet with no sociolinguistic
variation above the level of idiolect.

With the entrance of Vea into the story, Le Guin introduces the issue of language
and gender. Shevek has already learned as a child about the status of women as
property in Ioti society, and confirms the existence of this patronized female subclass
through his discussions with scientists at the university. Indeed, we are told that a
shy man engaged in conversation with Shevek refutes Vea and seems to "gain courage
from his dismissal of the woman from the realms of higher thought" (p. 224). But
the situation is not quite so simple, as Shevek discovers that Oiie, a scientist with
seemingly harsh views toward women, treats his own wife with courtesy and trust,

behaving "very much as an Anarresti might" (p. 147). The upper-class, drawling Vea, however, is the central enigma of the language and gender issue in A-Io. She is appalled at Shevek's suggestion that females are considered inferior to males, and asserts that women "run the men, of course" (p. 215). Vea, with her "minced words," (p. 196) subtly exploits the patronizing blindness of the Ioti men for her gain and directs conversations according to her desires. This is especially evident in the scene of the party, during which Shevek is struck by Vea's "acuteness" (p. 221) in evaluating male speech, sensing tension, stimulating conversation by allowing herself to be belittled (p. 224), and thwarting awkward moments by filling them with small talk (p. 226). Le Guin uses the linguistic acuity of the character of Vea to effectively "throw a monkey wrench" into Shevek's neat and preconceived analysis of the Ioti gender-class system.

The last sociolinguistic element of Urrasti speech that stands in stark contrast to Anarres is the consideration of certain Iotic words as "taboo." Unused to this limitation in speech, Shevek catches himself before violating "the Ioti taboo on scatological words" (p. 149). Nevertheless, his use of the slang term "birdseed" for the popular urban press is regarded by Atro as a "vulgarism" (p. 141). As noted previously, Pravic has no provisions for "blasphemy." Iotic, on the other hand, seems to provide Atro with the ability to swear by "the Primal Number" (p. 142), which we know to be *1* (p. 33), but which we also may conclude is a religious symbol from Kimoe's statement that the devout Second Officer on the spaceship "recites the Primes every night" (p. 14). Once again Le Guin establishes the antithetical relationship between the sociolinguistic elements of Pravic and Iotic as an analogy for the contrastive relationship between Anarres and Urras.

Individual Analysis

Certain Urrasti individuals exhibit language features that shed more light on elements of the social situation in A-Io. With regards to members of the upper class, Vea has already been mentioned. Pae, another member, is an agent of the Iotic government and speaks with characteristic charm and evasiveness, causing Shevek to treat him with mistrust. Le Guin also describes Pae as speaking in a "rapid drawl" (p. 70), a trait of the educated classes. Considering that to speak with a *drawl* requires one to use "lengthened or drawn-out vowels" (American Heritage Dictionary), this mention of a "rapid drawl" is linguistically puzzling. To resolve this we may assume that what Le Guin considers a "drawl" is the presence not of *lengthened* vowels, but of *glided* ones (diphthongs). Diphthongized vowels are a normal result of vowel lengthening, but these may also be produced with shorter durations at a high rate of speech. The presence of a large number of diphthongs with short durations in Pae's upper-class speech may therefore be the feature underlying its depiction as a "rapid drawl."

Two other characters whose linguistic actions are significant in the Ioti social structure are those of Oiie and Efor. Both of these individuals, a university scientist and a servant, exhibit code-switching between different sociolects. Shevek observes that Oiie becomes "a changed man at home" (p. 147) and abandons the drawl he employs while at the university. (No mention is made of whether Pae and Vea, the other "drawlers," also forgo their sociolect in any situation.) Oiie's ability to switch out of the upper-class sociolect is likely due to the lower-class history of his family. He reveals to Shevek that his grandfather was a janitor and his father became a successful businessman. Oiie is thus a member of a "social-climber" family, for whom membership in the upper class is not a guarantee and the ability to code-switch is

a useful tool, whether naturally or artificially developed.

Efor, Shevek's servant at the university, code-switches between Niotic and standard Iotic ("quite clear Iotic," p. 193). The ability to utilize the standard sociolect is a necessary requirement for his occupation, although he speaks in Niotic with Shevek when a sense of egalitarianism has been created. Shevek, unused to such a hierarchy within language, is naturally surprised when he encounters it:

> "Not living. Three born. Hard on the old sow. But now she say, 'Oh, well, don't have to be heartbreaking over 'em, just as well after all!' Is there anything else I can do for you, sir?" The sudden switch to upper-class syntax jolted Shevek...
>
> (pp. 283-284)

It should be noted that the mention of "upper-class" syntax does not imply that Efor employs the upper-class drawl exhibited by Oiie, Vea, and Pae. The extent of his switching ability lies in moving from the unique accent and syntax of Niotic to the "upper-class" (i.e. standard) syntax of Iotic with polite address forms (*sir, doctor*). With such a skill at his disposal, Efor has a better opportunity to scale the social ladder of A-Io.

Pravic-Iotic Contact

It may be useful to consider here the various as-yet unmentioned incidences of contact between Pravic and Iotic within The Dispossessed and how they reflect the disparity between the two cultures. Since Shevek grows up learning Pravic, described by the Terran ambassador as "the only rationally invented language that has become the tongue of a great people" (p. 339), he finds the grammar of the natural

Iotic language "complex, illogical, and patterned," but also pleasing (p. 107). When compared with the various dialects and styles of the language on Urras, Anarres and its carefully constructed language seem stale and sterile. Shevek also becomes aware of the contrast in their synonyms for "better": The Urrasti say "higher" where the Anarresti use "more central," revealing the importance of superiority on Urras (p. 15).

We have already discussed Pravic's general lack of singular possessive pronouns. It is therefore interesting to observe Shevek's attempt at assimilation into Ioti culture through the use of possessives. Upon arriving in A-Io, he remarks that "the head is heavy" (p. 72), but soon grows accustomed to using the pronoun *my* and does so "without self-consciousness" (p. 134). Several situations of miscommunication, some humorous, also occur as a result of the disparity between language conventions on the two worlds. For example, Shevek interprets the statement that he does not "drink" to mean that he does not ingest liquids of any kind (p. 79), since the euphemism for alcohol intake is unknown to him. Pae and Oiie are also surprised to learn that Gvarab and Odo were women, as they are unable to gather such information from the gender-neutral names of the Anarresti (p. 74). Finally, Shevek ingenuously (though somewhat naively) answers "no" to the question of whether he has a "wife": For him the idea of a *wife* is strictly Urras-specific and does not equate to the concept of an Anarresti *partner* (pp. 199-200).

An interesting dissimilarity in politeness conventions is also displayed in the dinner scene at Oiie's residence. Ini, Oiie's youngest boy, expects Shevek to utilize Ioti custom and say "thank you" when he is passed a dish of pickles. Shevek, however, remarks that he thought Ini was sharing them with him, and that the Anarresti "say thank you only for gifts" (p. 147). The frank and communal nature of Anarres as manifested in its language therefore stands in contrast to the politeness conventions

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of Urrasti language and society.

Conclusion

Given the preceding analysis, it is clear that Ursula K. Le Guin has successfully employed elements of sociolinguistics in her novel, <u>The Dispossessed</u>. Nevertheless, we must ask to what end the author has included sociolinguistics in her repertoire of tools: What purpose do the analyzed elements exhibit in the story? The answer is threefold: First, as mentioned in the introduction, Le Guin has created "good" science fiction by establishing a sense of the *alien* or *the other*. While the speech and formalities of Urras are familiar to us, the language and conventions of Anarres are entirely foreign to native English speakers. The strangeness of the Odonian society is therefore reinforced by the strangeness of the language itself.

Second, although admittedly strange and foreign, the society on Anarresti is made believable through its strange sociolinguistic elements. The feasibility of a stable and long-lived anarchist society on a barren planet would be met with much more skepticism had Le Guin failed to present a language that adequately fits the society. Readers of science fiction would do well to question stories in which disparate cultures and races speak the same way, as this exhibits a lack of consideration for linguistics on the part of the author. Le Guin, however, has gone beyond the mere consideration of linguistics to utilize sociolinguistics and create a believable universe.

The last and most important purpose served by the depiction of sociolinguistic differences between Pravic and Iotic is its contribution to the central motif of <u>The Dispossessed</u>: the idea of *the wall*. Anywhere a disparity, a difference, a dissimilarity, or a discrepancy exists between the Anarresti and the Urrasti languages – there stands a wall. These "walls of the tongue" are ubiquitous in the linguistic

environments. They stand in the realms of politeness conventions, gendered language, social and regional variation, profanity, and manners of address, existing as imposing boundaries between Urras and Anarres, which Shevek attempts to breach. In a poignant literary fulfillment of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, these walls of the tongue in Le Guin's novel are an integral part of the social consciousness of the two cultures, and have indeed become *walls of the mind*:

"It is all I can see in your eyes–the wall, the wall!"

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Appendices

Contained in these appendices is miscellaneous linguistic information gleaned from The Dispossessed for which no appropriate place within the body of the paper could be found.

A. Hints of Terran

Shevek's interaction with individuals from Terra (i.e. Earth) in the embassy on Urras provides us with some limited exposure to his perception of the Terran language. The first of these is the expression uttered on page 338:

"*Mai-god!*" the Terran said under his breath.

Our natural familiarity with English allows us to recognize this alien interjection as Le Guin's (or Shevek's) transliteration of "My God!" It also reveals the Urrasti pronunciation of the grapheme sequence *ai* as "aye" (also found in the word "Hainish" and the transliteration of "Einstein" as "Ainsetain" on pages 278-279).

On the following page, Keng's (the Terran ambassador) voice is described as husky, having an "odd, singsong quality" (p. 339). One might conclude from this that the standard Terran intonational patterns differ in a marked way from Urrasti and Anarresti intonation.

B. Notes on Pravic Phonology and Acquisition

The majority of Pravic samples present in the novel are names, some of the "unusual" ones being *Kadagv, Kvetur, Gvarab, Kvigot*, and *Farigv*. These are unusual in the sense that they exhibit the consonant clusters /gv/ and /kv/, which are excluded from English by its phonotactic rules and are therefore foreign to English readers. The Wikipedia article on Pravic posits these as single labiovelar consonants, but it is also possible that the sonority hierarchy of Pravic is arranged such that the velar stops /g/ and /k/ may precede the voiced labial fricative /v/ in both a syllable onset and coda. (The amount to which a language considers consonants to be *sonorous*– how much they are like vowels–determines their possible orders at the beginning of a syllable and at the end. An English example of this generalization, known as the Sonority Sequencing Principle, involves the consonants /l/ and /p/. /l/ is more sonorous than /p/; Thus, /pl/ is a legitimate syllable onset, as in "**pl**ace," but not a coda. Likewise, /lp/ works as a coda, as in "he**lp**," but not as an onset.)

Some elements regarding language acquisition in Pravic also appear, though represented in English. For instance, Takver notes in a letter to Shevek that their daughter Sadik "can say yite for light" (p. 257). This substitution of the glide [j] for the liquid [l] is indeed a well-known feature of child language acquisition (Fromkin, p. 357). Another sample can be found on page 367, where the child Pilun says "hup" for "up." Whether this type of [h] insertion actually manifests itself in child speech is unknown to this author, but we may safely assume that Le Guin, being the writer that she is, bases such elements on real-world experiences and has thus encountered "hup" forms of this type. Finally, young Shevek's exclamations of "mine sun" (p. 27) reveal his language development at that point to have reached the stage of *telegraphic speech* (Fromkin, p. 364).

C. Notes on Iotic

An interesting feature of Iotic that appears in several places is the tendency to delete pronouns and even verbs when the speaker knows them to be assumed, or when an impersonal pronoun would be used. Atro, Chifoilisk, Oiie, and Pae all exhibit this deletion pattern in the story:

Atro:

"Didn't get around to giving me mine till I was sixty or so..." (p. 68) [deleted: *they*]

"Took you for a man of forty then!" (p. 68) [deleted: *I*]

Chifoilisk:

"An older rival; jealous; meddled with your books; been clear enough." (p. 69) [deleted: *he was* (x2), *he, it/that has*]

"Should have thought you'd had enough..." (p. 87) [deleted: *I*]

Oiie:

"Can't tell from your names, of course." (p. 74) [deleted: *I/we/one*]

Pae:

"Can't do the math; no head for abstract thought; don't belong." (p. 73) [deleted: *they, they have, they*]

"Always having revolutions." (p. 80) [deleted: *they are/it is*]

"Afraid it's been pulled down." (p. 87) [deleted: *I am*]

"Gone all to ruins...Must be empty." (p. 88) [deleted: *it has, it*]

It is difficult to determine whether this is a deliberate dialect feature introduced by the author. However, the existence of similar patterns in Niotic leads one to conclude

that this is more than simply an element of Le Guin's conversational writing style. Quite possibly this deletion pattern exists show how standard Iotic is influenced by Niotic syntax, which itself is covered in the next appendix.

D. Analysis of Niotic

Note that Le Guin does not actually give this dialect a name beyond "the city dialect" spoken by "the Nioti" (p. 193). However, it follows from analogy that if the Ioti speak Iotic, we may refer to the dialect of the Nioti as *Niotic*.

Niotic manifests a characteristic pronunciation scheme, commonly known as an *accent*, that differs from the phonology of standard Iotic. Le Guin describes the clerk at the Terran embassy as speaking in "the purest Nioti accent" (p. 337), and notes that Shevek learns to follow the consistent "shift of sound values" exhibited by Niotic (p. 193). The actual pronunciation features are never described, however, and we are left with only the "apocopations" (p. 193) of the Niotic syntax to analyze. Le Guin's hyperbolic assertion that "half the words were left out" (p. 193) notwithstanding, Niotic is grammatical: It exhibits rule-governed, not erratic, behavior with very few exceptions.

The first of these behaviors is a consistent use of the *bare root* verb form (Wolfram, p. 346) for the infinitive, past tense, present tense, and future tense. Efor, our primary Niotic speaker, exhibits these substitutions in several places. In the case of the infinitive, he produces a bare root such as "set" where the standard prescribes the form "to set" (substituted verbs are bolded in the following examples):

"I make room **set** this down here." (p. 193) [replaced: *to set*]

"Try **manage** things like you want..." (p. 194) [replaced: *to manage*]

"She never wants nobody **nurse** her beside me..." (p. 283) [replaced: *to*

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nurse]

The past tense is likewise expressed:

"**Get** onto them when I **work** for a man in Nio once." (p. 287) [replaced:
got, worked]

"Know who it **come** from." (p. 288) [replaced: *came*]

"He **come** to my shop asking the way here, Tuio." (p. 293) [speaker: Old
Town shopkeeper; replaced: *came*]

Efor also deletes the third-person inflectional *-s* suffix, reducing present tense verbs
to their bare root forms:

"What my old sow **say**." (p. 283)

Finally, the modal auxiliary verb *will* to express the future mood is omitted[1]:

"I **make** room set this down here." (p. 193)

"Nobody you don't want **get** past me..." (p. 276)

"Don't go by the gate, they **stop** you there sure." (p. 289)

In a manner similar to characteristics of standard Iotic, Niotic occasionally drops
the first-person or second singular pronouns:

"Try manage things like you want..." (p. 194) [deleted: *I*]

"Can say you're still working, sir." (p. 282) [deleted: *I*]

"Look tired again, sir...Better rest." (p. 285) [deleted: *you* (x2)]

"Don't think so." (p. 287) [deleted: *I*]

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[1]It seems also to be the case that the conditional mood is collapsed into the bare root by deletion
of the modal auxiliary *would*:

"...not them you be took to if you was worse." (p. 283)

An alternate past participle form is utilized as well ("took" for "taken").

It is conceivable that the presence of this feature in Niotic may be the cause of the comparable behavior in Iotic.

Copula deletion (Wolfram, p. 349) is another noticeable characteristic of the city dialect, exhibited by the loss of *be* conjugations and other auxiliaries. This deletion, however, is blocked by the presence of the copula or auxiliary as a *clitic* ("I**'m**," "it**'s**," "you**'re**," "they**'ll**," etc.):

> "Then they'll fetch the doctor sure." (p. 282) [deletion blocked by clitic *'ll* (*will*)]
>
> "How you going to hide?" (p. 283) [deleted: *are*]
>
> "And nobody hungry?" (p. 284) [deleted: *is*]
>
> "Where you from?" (p. 292) [speaker: Old Town shopkeeper; deleted: *are*]
>
> "You're him?" (p. 292) [speaker: Old Town shopkeeper; deletion blocked by clitic *'re* (*are*)]
>
> "He say he the...one from Anarres." (p. 293) [speaker: Old Town shopkeeper; deleted: *is*]

This failure to delete a copula in the presence of a clitic suggests a type of Generative Phonology-esque rule ordering in which cliticization occurs before copula deletion.

Finally, some miscellaneous dialect features appearing sporadically in Efor's Niotic are multiple negation ("She never wants nobody nurse her..." p. 283), ellipsis (*establishment*→"stablishment" p. 283), and was-leveling ("...if you was worse." p. 283).

Efor does not exhibit these deletion features in every possible instance. For example, he fails to omit the third-person inflectional *-s* in the sentence, "She never

wants nobody nurse her..." (p. 283) and does not delete "I" or "you" in every case. It is important to note, however, that such exceptions in Niotic are not cases of "over-deletion," but of "under-deletion." This fact, coupled with the example of Efor's isolated standard form ("wants") occurring in the midst of a Niotic sentence, suggests two possibilities: Either this is an oversight on the part of Le Guin or the editor, or Efor is unconsciously producing some standard features in Niotic regardless of whether he is code-switching at the moment. The evidence seems to support the latter conclusion, given Efor's presence in the sociolinguistic environment of standard Iotic and his knowledge of that dialect. Thus, the psycholinguistic behavior of Efor does not preclude the classification of Niotic as rule-governed and grammatical.