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Tarpey-Brown, Francis

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Glimpsing Cracks in the Present: Acts of Utopian Desire and Resistance at Gezi Park and the Aboriginal Tent Embassy

Francis Tarpey-Brown

Ph.D. Candidate

Gender, Sexuality and Diversity Studies Program
Department of Politics and Philosophy, La Trobe University
Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract

Present prefigurations of a dystopian future are visible at every turn. Amidst the ongoing development of authoritarian capitalism, the rising cultural and institutional power of what many have termed neo-fascism, transnational organisations warning of imminent environmental devastation, decreasing standards of living paralleling growing wealth inequality and the prevalence of social and psychological crises of depression and disaffection, a commitment to action based on a desire for a radically altered and more just world seems futile and even dangerously irresponsible. We are compelled to be pragmatic and alleviate the catastrophes to come. However such a reading of the possibilities of the present relies on a particular understanding—and experience—of ‘our time’ as homogenous, historically myopic and more or less permanently stuck under the thumb of the hegemonic terms that govern it. Such hegemony, though, is both necessarily contingent and contested. Against this chronopathology or time-sickness, turning our gaze towards acts and events that manifest a utopian desire allows us to see the cracks in the present demonstrating the unsettled, dis-jointed and dis-adjusted nature of ‘our time’. This piece explores two events of resistance that manifest(ed) such desire and call on us to acknowledge, explore and embrace the cracks. The Gezi Park protests that erupted out of Istanbul in 2013 demonstrated possibilities that almost always fall under the sign of utopian impossibility. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy likewise has been dismissed as an impossible entity in itself, reclaiming space from the colonial occupiers; developing programs to support and strengthen the presently vulnerable whilst demanding and enacting a desire for a different future; and struggling in solidarity with others around the globe. Such acts haunt any proclaimed closure of the present and demand a critical inheritance of their manifestations of utopian desire if we want to see the light through the cracks. This piece attempts to at least provide a glimpse the spectral heritage of such utopian acts.

Keywords: Utopia; Utopian desire; Resistance; Time; Temporality; Gezi Park; Protest; Aboriginal Tent Embassy

A Closed Present?

Amidst an apparently dystopian present we are asked to think the Utopian Act. So we begin, necessarily, where we supposedly are, in the present. What can we say of our present political

time? Of the presence of politics in our time? Of the politics of the present in our time? How might we even define the limits of ‘our time’? When was the before, and when comes the after? The pictures that roll through twenty-four-hour news cycles and across social media feeds paint a grim picture; they confirm our image of the present as dystopian. And, no doubt, countless others could be painted to demonstrate the bleak situation we find ourselves facing globally in the present. Whilst shot through with complexity born of the ‘muck of ages’, as Marx called a certain trajectory of the history of struggle that always complicates a clean picture,¹ a conglomeration of pervasive dystopian expressions of neoliberal capitalism appears to be the sovereign power of our time. The present seems constant, no longer a node in linear history nor merely a lived moment between past and future, but an ‘homogenous, empty time’, to quote Walter Benjamin.² Although increasingly chaotic and seemingly divided within, the terms of the present remain narrow in their production of the limits of political possibility. Refusal to live in what is properly considered to be ‘the present’ will be met with ridicule, erasure, violence and death. But how, then, are we to understand this mess we call the present, at least in political, economic and socio-cultural terms in its particularity? And if it is sovereign—all powerful—how then could we understand a utopian act that ruptures the present and turns our gaze towards other more just ways of being that are not (yet) here?

In order to see the ways utopian desire and acts of resistance relate to notions of the seemingly sovereign governing forces of ‘our time’,³ I will sketch an outline of what we might, counter-intuitively perhaps, consider a harmonious present. (Etymologically: harmony, from the Greek *harmonia*—‘agreement, concord’, ‘means of joining’, also ‘settled government, order’—comes from *harmos*, ‘joint’).⁴ This is not to suggest that the dominant frame for understanding politics in our time is one that sees or emphasises values of ‘peace and harmony’, but rather that the terms through which we understand and engage with politics are harmonious in the etymological sense of the word; they rely on a certain consensus, a certain ‘joining’, a ‘world order’ (that once itself was considered ‘new’...). Now, even if ‘the end of history’ thesis heralded by the apparent reconciliation and homogenisation of geopolitics after the Cold War seems to be increasingly dismissed as an insufficient analysis of the present, proclamations of the presence of democracy in and as its capitalist, liberal and state form continue to foreclose the possibility of (even imagining) radical social, economic and political change. The dominant temporal, epistemological and ontological values set forth by the unfolding of ‘European world history’ of the present echo Fukuyama’s declaration of the end of history and his imperative to keep our eyes firmly on the prize whilst ignoring the rabble outside:

Our task is not to answer exhaustively the challenges to liberalism promoted by every crackpot messiah around the world [of whom we seem to see more and more]... it matters very little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso, for we are interested in what one could in some sense call the common ideological heritage of mankind.⁵

Of course, this ‘end of history’—however harmonious or disharmonious it may appear to us—names not an abstract or inevitable set of conditions but rather particular modes of governance produced by a certain ‘harmony’ between state and non-state actors, in terms of political imagination, grounded in a foreclosing historico-political temporal logic. This particularity is

¹ Karl Marx, 1932, *The German Ideology*. Marxists.org, 2000, accessed 30 June 2018.

https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf.

² Walter Benjamin, 1940, ‘On the Concept of History’. Translated by Dennis Redmond, Marxists.org, 2006, accessed 9 September 2017. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>. 39.

³ An article dealing in more detail and conceptual depth in regards to naming the ‘sovereign present’ is forthcoming.

⁴ ‘Harmony’, Online Etymology Dictionary, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/harmony>.

⁵ Francis Fukuyama, ‘The End of History?’, *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 12.

not acknowledged as such and instead claims to speak the language of universality: ‘a common ideological heritage of mankind’.⁶ The structuring of the present as our politico-temporal field seeks to (make) *present* consistency, even harmony: everyone is, or ought to be, free to engage in the marketplace (of goods, or ideas), and what more could we possibly desire? We can work for a more just world, so long as we remain within the established terms of the governing (neo-)liberal tradition—there is no opening to the coming of a radically different future.⁷ To play with the coordinates of the present is seen as either fatally dangerous, or the possibility of doing so is not even seen at all.

Political philosopher Wendy Brown goes as far as to say that the Aristotelian conception of the human as a political animal (*homo politicus*) has been replaced by the neoliberal construction of the species as *homo economicus*. The advent of neoliberalism first imposed ‘through fiat and force’ in Chile, for example, ‘today is more often enacted through specific techniques of governance [of a park, an unemployment or indeed employment program, etc.], through best practices and legal tweak, in short through ‘soft power’ drawing on consensus and buy-in, than through violence, dictatorial command, or even over political platforms.’⁸ Democratic political engagement, if it exists at all, is subordinate to neoliberalism’s functioning as a sort of sophisticated common sense, a reality principle.⁹ The struggle is over, the openings of the past have closed, the very meaning of the human has changed and changed in such a way that the possibilities for asking questions about such change or any further alterations are all but gone. In a similar spirit, Mark Fisher describes the present as saturated in what he calls Capitalist Realism.¹⁰ It seems there is but one world, joined under the sign(s) of neoliberal capitalism. From here, it looks like politics has evacuated the scene. As Slavoj Žižek argues, at a certain point it seems ‘we are all Fukuyamaists’.¹¹ The space for politics—understood as the space in which resistance emerges and struggles for justice can unsettle governing norms—has been reduced. From such a point of view, the possibility of enacting (utopian) desire for a radically altered and more just world is simply not ‘there’.

What Brown calls the ‘undoing of the demos’ has taken place and at this point it seems politics—in the grand sense of the word—is something that has been made impossible by harmonious consistency in the sense of our well joined neoliberal ‘settled order’. Radical political possibility—and thus any utopian act—requires disharmony. For Jacques Rancière:

Politics does not exist because... men [sic] place their interests in common. Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, *the contradiction of two worlds in a single world*: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something ‘between’ them and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count and the world where there is nothing.¹²

To think political possibility, then, compels us to think about the space *between* worlds, about the collisions, the disruptions, the cracks in the dominant conglomeration of understanding and

⁶ Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000). In a certain sense it does if we take into account the work of Deleuze and Guattari on axiomatisation.

⁷ Other than perhaps a radically dystopian one which seems a cultural obsession from *Children of God* to *The Handmaid’s Tale*, or even the way we speak about US President Trump and Brexit.

⁸ Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁰ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (London: Zero Books, 2009).

¹¹ Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009), 91.

¹² Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 27.

doing politics (which is also economics, also sociality) in *that* world, and in ‘our time’. This has ramifications for how we can think the presence of any kind of present as ‘settled order’; we face the contradiction—the impossibility, perhaps—of *more than one world in a single world*. I have previously referred to the present as ‘our time’, but as Brown herself has argued,¹³ the gathering together required by such a phrase hides its reduction of the multiplicity of any given moment supposedly defined by the hands on ‘*the clock of the world*’.¹⁴ Gayatri Spivak illustrates this by recounting the retelling of an encounter ‘with three illiterate friends who could not tell time’ (by a *particular* clock) and having her story denounced as ‘voyeurism’ or ‘anthropologisation’ by those trapped in thinking promises of emancipation as linear.¹⁵ Brown describes an homogenising neoliberal present, but in another time riffs off Walter Benjamin’s praise of the angelic or ghostly presence of pasts that ‘blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history’ and call for different futures.¹⁶ More than one world, more than one time, at once. The present is not settled, it is haunted by that which it cannot assimilate. To put it in Jacques Derrida’s terms, to whom we shall soon turn, ‘the world has more than one age’.¹⁷ Now, let’s turn to (at least) two utopian acts that act as cracks through the consistency of an ‘homogenous empty time’.

Acts of Utopian Desire

In June of 2018 Turkish citizens awoke to news of the re-election of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. There is increasing concern—if one reads the liberal media—around the rising authoritarianism of his AK (‘Justice and Development’) party. The same media sources, of course, only a few short years ago were head over heels for what at the time was being called ‘the Turkish model’: the apparently miraculous execution of ‘democratic’ governance and marketized development by a Muslim-majority nation-state. The outrage, understated as it is, is late to the party. Measuring by the Gregorian calendar and linear historical time, in May 2013 as the lauded ‘Turkish Model’ of neoliberal ‘democracy’ continued to receive international praise,¹⁸ a small camp of protestors intent on protecting Gezi Park—a green space in the centre of Istanbul built upon the remains of an Armenian cemetery and host to family picnics by day and an assorted diverse ‘rabble’ by night—from destruction that would make way for an Ottoman-themed shopping mall were attacked by riot police. The days that followed brought hundreds of thousands more protesters and engulfed Istanbul in clouds of tear gas covering scenes of severe police brutality.¹⁹

Turkey’s ‘slide into authoritarianism’ would not be news to the family of Berkin Elvan, a 14-year old who died after a tear-gas canister was shot at his head by police, and whose memory stands as just one of many instances of brutality inflicted upon the protestors. Nor would it be news to any of the reported ten percent of the country who engaged in the demonstrations against the state hailed as miraculous by the torchbearers of western civilisation and liberal democracy (the EU and US) and institutions of global capital (the World Bank and

¹³ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Gayatri Spivak, ‘On Revolution’, Columbia University Law (blog), 14 September 2017, <http://blogs.law.columbia.edu/uprising1313/gayatri-chakravorty-spivak-on-revolution/>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter, 1940, *On the Concept of History*. Translated by Dennis Redmond, marxists.org, 2005, accessed 9 September 2017. <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.

¹⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx* (London: Routledge, 1994), 19.

¹⁸ Cihan Tuğal, *The Fall of the Turkish Model: How the Arab Uprising Brought Down Islamic Liberalism* (London: Verso, 2016).

¹⁹ *Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey* (London: Amnesty International, 2013). <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/12000/eur440222013en.pdf>.

IMF) alike. It should go without saying the protestors occupied their cities not simply in the name of protecting a single park. Rather, millions of people occupied public space—an act directly in opposition to both the private development of Gezi and ongoing generalised plans for privatisation—to declare their will and right to engage politically against a present that seeks to deny this very possibility. Istanbul, a city that may seem frozen in time as the crossroads between Europe and its other(s), was renamed *Isyanbul* (Resistanbul). The occupation, defended against the police by fires, bodies and barricades (some made of stolen police vehicles) demonstrated the possibility of a(nother) future. People had taken to the streets to occupy and (re)make public space and called for others to do the same. They gathered to air their grievances on questions such as property development and demolitions, urban planning, religious and or social conservatism, alcohol consumption, reproductive rights, animal rights, poverty and precarity, political representation, corruption, discrimination and (social *and* state) violence against LGBTIQ+ people, sex workers, religious and ethnic minorities. It was a heterogeneous, not necessarily harmonious, environment. The demonstrators were not meant to be working together; there were contradictions but there were many surprising and sometimes fleeting alignments.

But people would listen to each other and learn. Solidarity was key. Against the hegemonic terms of neoliberal capitalism governing the present, the camp was declared ‘moneyless’. In the words of a friend of mine, ‘it was like we had built our own weird utopia.’ Gezi Park and the protests that engulfed the Taksim neighbourhood travelled through time and space: ‘Everywhere Taksim Everywhere Resistance!’ could be seen from the walls of São Paulo subways through to celebrity Twitter feeds. Erdoğan received some condescending cautions from statespeople such as John Kerry, but along with the tear gas canisters made primarily in Brazil and the US, this only served to reinforce his (and the model’s) ‘democratic’ status. Whilst the protests may be long gone in the obvious sense, the experiences and lessons learned from such events have constituted what has been called—and not just by academics and journalists but by participants and the general population—‘the spirit of Gezi’.²⁰ Gezi’s prefigurative potential exists for the memory of those involved, who saw or who learn about it now, and this ‘spirit’ haunts the troubled city of Istanbul and, in a certain way, the rest of the world too. More than one world, more than one time, at once.

As I write this, a group of Djap Wurrung²¹ activists and others have set up three camps and an Embassy outside the colonial town of Ararat in South-Eastern Australia to defend birth sites of generations of their people, reaching back at least eight hundred years, against demolition for a redevelopment of the highway cutting through the area in the name of regional development. (Read: further opening to tourism and other forms of capital.) This embassy is one of many that have appeared in the name of precisely a past (and present, and future; we can tentatively say a ‘presence’) that blasts open the semblance of a finally settled sovereign ‘Australia’ and thus any ‘settled’ present of a world (map) or globalised chronology, which emerges from but obscures our continuous swirling in what Marx called ‘the muck of ages’. Whilst the Gezi protests no doubt emerged from their own long heritages but enacted a new kind of resistant subjectivity grounded in solidarity, Aboriginal resistance to colonial invasion on the land we call Australia has continued since at least 1788.

Responses to the Djap Wurrung protestors have included the suggestions to offer them poisoned flour ‘like in the old days’ or ‘shoot them like you do other pests’—both documented

²⁰ Serhat Karakayalı and Özge Yaka, ‘The Spirit of Gezi: The Recomposition of Political Subjectivities in Turkey’, *New Formations* 83 (2014): 117-38.

²¹ The name of the Aboriginal people who have lived since before European invasion on the western central plains of Victoria, about 250 kilometres northwest of present-day Melbourne. Also transliterated as Djap Wurrung and/or Tjapwurrung.

methods of Australian colonisation.²² Whilst federal and state governments claim progressive policies and ‘ways forward’ toward a harmonious and reconciled nation, Aboriginal activists regularly express the sense that it’s ‘all just a little bit of history repeating’. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, eugenicist Richard Berry and Australian politicians developed the Mental Deficiency Bill, which sought to institutionalise and sterilise members of the population seen as ‘inefficient’, including ‘slum dwellers, homosexuals, prostitutes, alcoholics, as well as those with small heads and lower IQs’ and, of course, Aboriginal people. The bill passed in 1939, unanimously, but it was not enacted due to the outbreak of war and was eventually abandoned due to what Ross Jones has called ‘the embarrassment of the holocaust’.²³ A year earlier, amidst ongoing Aboriginal struggles for land rights and citizenship, prominent Yorta Yorta²⁴ activist William Cooper led a deputation of Kooris²⁵ from the Australian Aborigines League to the German Consulate in Melbourne where they expressed solidarity and attempted to lodge a formal protest ‘condemning the persecution of Jews and Christians in Germany.’²⁶ The colonial Australian project to build a harmonious ‘workingman’s paradise’ was here undermined by the power and generosity of Aboriginal Sovereignty.

The most emblematic manifestation of Aboriginal Sovereignty against the Australian state was the establishment of the original Aboriginal Tent Embassy opposite Parliament House in Canberra on 27 January 1972.²⁷ In his speech to the nation on 26 January 1972 (Australia Day/Invasion Day), Prime Minister Billy McMahon had explicitly rejected calls for land rights for Aboriginal people, whilst offering a deeply problematic policy of ‘general purpose leases’ dependent on what he called ‘reasonable economic and social use of the land’.²⁸ The potential economic benefits accrued through the lease could have been read as ‘progress’, but such a term necessitates the response ‘towards what?’ It seems that such a policy functions as a form of material enculturation into the prevailing order (homogenous history) of the colonial project, which is to say the prevailing order today, too. In contrast, the embassy that began in the early hours of the morning under a single umbrella and eventually became a camp occupying the lawn for six months before a series of brutal police interventions dismantled the embassy and forced the activists to leave, stood for something other. Under their own newly created flag, against McMahon’s insistence that the possibility of ‘separate development [Aboriginal self-determination as distinct from the Australian Government] as a long term aim is utterly alien’ to the Australian state and that land rights would only ‘lead to uncertainties and possible challenge’ to what was taken to be ‘presently unquestioned and secure’²⁹ the Embassy made

²² These comments were taken from a now-inactive Facebook page. For a broad overview of early genocide practices of the colonial invaders see Henry Reynolds’s *Forgotten War* (Sydney: NewSouth Books, 2013).

²³ Ross L. Jones, ‘Eugenics in Australia: The secret of Melbourne’s elite’, *The Conversation*, 20 September 2011, <https://theconversation.com/eugenics-in-australia-the-secret-of-melbournes-elite-3350>.

²⁴ Another Aboriginal people from central Victoria.

²⁵ Common form of self-identification for Aboriginal people from southeastern Australia.

²⁶ For a detailed history see Gary Foley, ‘Australia and the Holocaust’, *Koori Web*, 1997, http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/pdf_essays/australia%20and%20the%20holocaust.pdf. It is also worth noting that Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who coined the term ‘genocide’ as recognised in the U.N. definition of the term, based much of his work on the treatment of Aboriginal people by the colonising British in Tasmania.

²⁷ The previous day, 26 January, a contested temporal marker in Australian history, is officially known as Australia Day and hosts a national celebration of the arrival of the first fleet of British ships at Botany Bay. Unofficially, it is alternately called Invasion or Survival Day and has been marked as a ‘Day of Mourning’ since at least 1938.

²⁸ William McMahon cited in S. Robinson, ‘The Aboriginal Embassy: An Account of the Protests of 1972’, *Aboriginal History* 18, no. 1/2 (1994): 4.

²⁹ Despite this initial dismantling, the Embassy was reincarnated shortly after in the same position and has stood in one form or another since. The Embassy as a form of activism has also been utilised in various contexts

unsettling demands. John Newfong, spokesperson and media coordinator, released a strategic plan calling for:

1. Control of the Northern Territory as a state within the Commonwealth of Australia... with title and mining rights to all land within the Territory.
2. Legal title and mining rights to all other presently existing reserve lands and settlements throughout Australia.
3. The preservation of all sacred sites in Australia.
4. Legal title and mining rights to areas in and around all Australian capital cities.
5. Compensation monies for lands not returnable to take the form of a down-payment of six billion dollars [equivalent of 60 billion AUD in 2017] and an annual percentage of gross national income.³⁰

According to Gary Foley, one of the founding activists, the embassy was met with a degree of public approval and engagement from the non-Aboriginal community was strong. International media descended on the camp at varying times throughout the six months. The activists continued to build on and engage with global networks of solidarity as well as provide material support to their diverse and dispersed community at home. The Embassy, and the Black Power Movement in Australia more generally, aligned itself with struggles in South Africa and Vietnam, Latin America and, especially, the United States. In 1972, a delegation of activists was invited to China for a diplomatic meeting with members of the Chinese Communist Party. Various other embassies have been established since, and the emphasis on globality and solidarity remains: last year a delegation from the group Warriors for the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR) sent a delegation to Mapuche³¹ land in southern Chile, where native forests had been replaced by imported Eucalyptus and the rivers were running dry.

Ghosts of Utopian Desire

So, what are we to make of these events that are not just events but divergent temporalities, heritages of action, desire, hope, strategy, other modes of doing political community and economics? No doubt there are many, and I have spoken of only two. Here, Derrida's insistence on complicating temporality—or acknowledging temporality's complexity—is useful. In *Spectres of Marx*, his own 'untimely' engagement with the work of Marx after what has come to be known as the collapse of 'communism', he decries the closure of liberal triumphalism he sees taking root. Against the reduction and *joining* of the world to a very particular 'common ideological heritage' (Fukuyama)—and we may say that the tone has settled a little but the terms remain—Derrida insists we see that the time is in fact 'out of joint':

The time is out of joint. The world is going badly. It is worn but its wear no longer counts. Old age or youth- one no longer counts in that way. The world has more than one age. We lack the measure of the measure. We no longer realize the wear, we no longer take account of it as of a single age in the progress of history. Neither maturation, nor crisis, nor even agony. Something else. What is happening is happening to age itself, it strikes a blow at the teleological order of history. What is coming, in which the untimely appears, is happening to time but it does not happen in time. Contretemps. The time is out of joint. The age is off its hinges. Everything, beginning with time, seems out of kilter, unjust, dis-adjusted. The world is going very badly, it wears as it grows.³²

around Australia to enable Aboriginal people to assert their sovereignty, perhaps most famously in the Sydney suburb of Redfern. (Ibid., 24.)

³⁰ Heather Goodall, *Invasion to Embassy: Land in Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales, 1770-1972*, (St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

³¹ Indigenous people of Southern Chile and Argentina.

³² Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 20.

Out of joint, disharmonious. But something is happening that does join, between understandings of the present as one node in a teleological history that continues and the present as the end point, a point we (can) no longer measure. ‘Our’ neoliberal present as the best of all possible, the pinnacle of human development, or ‘our’ neoliberal present as what is because There Is No Alternative. The end has no end. Either way, the future is dead. Derrida may help us see this, but he refuses to submit and instead calls on us to turn ourselves over to ghosts, spectres and spirits—the stuff of ‘hauntology’. There is much more to say around the questions of hauntology and the deconstruction of presence and time, but it is the utopian strands at work to which we must draw our attention here. Hauntology, for Derrida, demands an engagement with inheritance, and that from which we must inherit comes to us (in the present) from both past and future. That which has been given by these other moments of history, these other histories, are ‘less the full response to a question than the measure of that to which we must respond today, inheritors that we are of more than one form of speech, as well as of an injunction that is itself *disjointed*.’³³ Again, *more than one*. Derrida compels us to think ‘the radical and necessary heterogeneity of an inheritance’, a response that demands the opposite of foreclosure. To begin to respond to that which haunts us—the spirit of Gezi or the ongoing apparitions demonstrating Aboriginal Sovereignty as but my two chosen spectres for today—requires a certain acceptance of precisely *not knowing* how to inherit, of being aware that ‘one always inherits from a secret – which says “read me, will you every be able to do so?”’³⁴ Remaining open to the possibilities of the secret, rather than attempting too readily to assimilate it, requires an acknowledgment of precisely the *disharmony* of the present, of the inconsistent, out-of-joint nature of our temporal and political experiences and our own capacities to envision and define the future.

Utopia, too, I want to say, both recognises and produces this disjuncture, a break, an otherness, a desire for the *not here and now*. But then how can we say it (is) ‘here and now’? A disharmony. There are many ways in which Gezi, Aboriginal Sovereignty and many other cases of resistance relate to the utopian and enact a utopian desire. In *The Politics of Utopia*, Frederic Jameson claims that today utopianism is usually dismissed as either a symptom of capitalism, of believing in infinite possibilities *within* the neoliberal socio-political and economic order (technological innovation, colonising space etc.), or else it is considered ‘wholly frivolous and irrelevant’ when it comes to the ‘poverty and the social disintegration’ in ‘that other world’.³⁵ I agree insofar as the word is often used that way; it is often a pejorative for futile hopes of reform, or unreal dreams and wild visions for the future. Against this, scholars such as Davina Cooper argue we need to acknowledge the political potential of a ‘utopian conceptual attitude’ and draw our attention to ‘really existing’ ‘everyday Utopias’.³⁶ Similarly, Ruth Levitas’s work on utopia as method, amongst other things, describes ways of engaging with the existence of utopia archeologically, ontologically and architecturally.³⁷ In the cases of resistance and utopian desire I have mentioned that demonstrate a cracking of the ‘settled order’ there are also concrete practices that must be learnt from. The importance of such is and should be noted beyond or before our conceptualisation or intellectualisation of the social, economic and political processes that took place and the way they may be read as (within an homogenous) history. But it is enough for us here to note that these concrete acts of utopian desire demonstrate that wild dreams have a certain reality; people have not only demanded but lived the impossible. We can find the utopian in the mundane and the magical. These events

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ Ibid., 19.

³⁵ Frederic Jameson, ‘The Politics of Utopia’, *New Left Review* 25 (2004): 35.

³⁶ Davina Cooper, *Everyday Utopias: The Everyday Life of Promising Spaces* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 24–44.

³⁷ Ruth Levitas, ‘Some varieties of utopian method’, *Irish Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 2 (2013): 43.

and movements ‘were’ and ‘are’. But they also never quite were and never quite are allowed to be inherited from in precisely their utopianism, in their radical *disjointedness* from the (proposed possibilities of the) present.

Conceptually speaking, we find a tension here: utopia as here and now (or there and then, but at some point entirely ‘present’) when utopia cannot be here and now. It may envision harmony but in doing so it must ring out of tune and thus requires and effects dis/harmony. There is something necessarily unsettled and disjointed, unsettling and *disjoining* about utopia—the line between the possible and impossible is built into the word itself (No place/Good place). This is again where Derrida’s work on hauntology can speak to us and why in my work I emphasise the utopian as desire rather than as presence: there is no harmony that can hold it; no homogenous order that can appropriately reckon with the desire for and im/possibility of otherness that utopia names. Perhaps it is best to think utopia not as a demand for harmony, but a relationship to time and space—and politics—that can hold resonant disruptive desires. Desires for movement and change that impact the political, social and economic, but also the temporal, that ‘blast open’ the semblance of history as homogenous and linear, that disrupt the proclaimed presence of ‘what is’ (possible) in the present through that which and those who haunt it—across what we conventionally understand as past, present and future. More than one world, more than one time, at once.

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