



**The Faculty of Arts and Education**

## **MASTER'S THESIS**

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**Abstract**

This master's thesis aims to frame Kurt Vonnegut and Ursula K. Le Guin as environmental thinkers. With climate change becoming an evermore visible treat, this thesis aims to look at how science fiction can provide a useful perspective on environmental issues and give readers a new perspective to approach these issues. More specifically, it aims to conceptualize the term planetary citizenship and explore how both Vonnegut's *Galápagos* (1985) and Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974) are prompting readers to reconceptualise their idea of what it means to be a citizen. In working with planetary citizenship and engaging with environmental themes and ideas that have been picked up by critics, the thesis aims to lay out how these authors are thinking about environmental issues in their work in the beginning of the environmental movement. It argues that Vonnegut and Le Guin are both environmental thinkers and that their work prompts readers to reconceptualise their idea of citizenship in a way that will help thinking about climate change and other environmental issues by contextualizing the implications of these issues. It builds upon the current critical interest in Vonnegut and Le Guin to explore the environmental themes and ideas that have been discussed in their work. Further on, uses close reading of the texts to find evidence of their environmental thinking beyond what the critics have explored. The thesis concludes that both Vonnegut and Le Guin are thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship based on findings in *Galápagos* and *The Dispossessed*. Because the narratives are dealing with entire planets and the human species as a whole, it shows how the narratives have a planetary perspective that includes both the human and the non-human. The thesis shows how science fiction is a good genre for discussing environmental issues and it gives readers a new perspective to how to consider themselves a citizen of the planet. The thesis demonstrates how thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is a useful tool in analysing environmental literature and science fiction.

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## Introduction

### I.0 Introduction

As climate change becomes ever more present in our day-to-day lives and in media, it is getting more important than ever to have conversations about human impact on the environment. To be able to put into words what damage has been done, and what damage might still be done if nothing changes, is the beginning of a long road ahead to heal our planet. However, for many this discussion feels alien and far off, because climate change does not directly affect them in any noticeable way, or these issues just feel too big, and it is therefore hard to know where to begin this conversation. Environmental literature, especially environmental science fiction (sf) literature, is a great tool to begin these conversations and to help put into words what is happening to the planet and how to think about these problems in ways that feels comprehensible. When reading about these issues, one starts to think about them, visualise them, and talking about them, which hopefully leads to actions that might prevent further damage. What I want to suggest, then, is that environmental sf literature can prompt readers to think about environmental issues and further on how they can prompt thinking about citizenship differently.

As sf literature often deals with planets and the human species, or a human like species, I want to suggest that sf literature might help reconceptualize the idea of citizenship and being a citizen. This new idea of citizenship is one that, like sf narratives often do, includes thinking about the whole planet and the human species as a whole. It is a citizenship that goes beyond human made borders of countries and help readers think about the entire planet as a home or a place that one can belongs to, which will put a larger context to choices and actions, especially related to climate change and other environmental issues.

The main aim of my thesis is to explore and discuss the environmental awareness in sf literature by postmodern authors Kurt Vonnegut and Ursula K. Le Guin. The novels I will be discussing are *Galápagos* (1985) by Vonnegut and *The Dispossessed: an Ambiguous Utopia* (1974) by Le Guin. I will be looking at how these narratives work to explore environmental themes and ideas, and how they prompt further thinking about environmental issues. More specifically, I aim to introduce and conceptualize the term “planetary citizenship” and discuss how Vonnegut and Le Guin’s work prompt thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. I will be exploring how this term is useful in discussing the environmental aspects of Vonnegut and Le Guin’s work, while also providing insights that could be useful in discussing other environmental works, both sf and other. I will be laying out the environmental ideas critics have picked up in *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* and I will build on their findings to discuss

how these novels prompt thinking about and imagining a citizenship that goes beyond the human made boundaries of countries.

In a rather absurd narrative about how ten people end up repopulating the Earth on an island after a bacterium ends human reproduction abilities on the mainland, Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos* manages to put human actions into planetary scale. The ghost of Leon Trout, the omnipresent first-person narrator, is looking back from a million years in the future where the human species has evolved to become seal-like creatures, to explain how these ten people ended up on the island in 1986. The narrator tells the tale of how a group of people ends up in a hotel in Ecuador on their way to a cruise that will take them to the Galápagos islands. However, due to a series of accidents, not all characters make it to the island. While the group of characters that the narrative is centred around are rather one dimensional, the ghostly narrator stands out as a voice of reason and truth in his unfiltered commentary on destructive human behaviour towards each other and the planet. It is the narrator's planetary perspective and his own experiences that prompt a reconceptualizing of what it means to be a citizen and how one should consider oneself to be a citizen of the planet. With his unique million-year perspective, the narrator assesses humanity's behaviour in contrast to the seal-like creatures in his own present time who turns out to be both harmless and content. In dealing with the fate of the human species, with a narrator who has such a large perspective, I argue Vonnegut prompts readers to reconsider what it means to be a citizen by not limiting citizenship to countries.

While in Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974) the narrative perspective is not as big in terms of time scale, it instead takes on what life is like on two neighbouring planets who differ greatly from each other in terms of natural ecology and social structure. The narrative follows Shevek in alternating chapters between his life on his home planet Anarres and his life as a guest on the neighbour planet Urras. Urras is Earth like and mostly familiar in terms of ecology and culture, however, the reader get to experience it through Shevek's alien perspective, because his home planet is quite different. Through narrative descriptions and character observations, *Dispossessed* forces the reader to view Earth from a new perspective and reconsider what it takes to be a citizen by showing life on the barren and dry planet Anarres. Though the setting on Anarres is alien to the reader, Le Guin presents life there with all the complexity and depth that life on Earth brings, immersing the reader in a life that is unfamiliar. In dealing with whole planets and showing what life is like on them, Le Guin prompts readers to think about the planet as a whole, not limiting the perspective to countries, and to reconsider, I argue, what it means to be a citizen of a planet.

These novels, through their narrative, puts perspective on environmental issues and prompts readers to think about these problems from a different perspective. While Vonnegut considers what it means to look at things from the perspective of the planet, Le Guin focuses on the more human issue of citizenship. Together they create an interesting combination that allows readers to see the depth and nuance of what it means to be a planetary citizen.

### **I.1 Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos***

The first novel I will be looking at is *Galápagos* (1985) by Kurt Vonnegut. Vonnegut is an American postmodernist writer who might be the most known for his satire and bleak humour within this work. However, another description of him reads, "Vonnegut was a grouchy but wise, funny and kind-hearted figure, who held up a mirror to American culture for over fifty years" (Hicks 2). Most of his work throughout his career "lingered in science-fiction-inflected obscurity" and he ended up becoming a "pop-culture icon despite his critical unpopularity" (Hicks 2). And despite his many critiques of humanity's actions, such as war and pollution, he was a "famous self-professed humanist" and became "honorary president of the American Humanist Association from 1992 until his death" (Hicks 2). His interest in the environmental movement is clear, he gave a speech during the first Earth Day in 1970, where he predicted that "[i]n the future [polluters] will be looked upon as swine" and he praised those who were trying "their best to save the planet" (Jarvis xii). However, his speech was reported to be the gloomiest of all the speakers, and he reportedly claimed that "the environmental movement was "a big sippy pillow"" (Jarvis xiii). He said this because as a pessimist he believed that "Nobody's going to *do* anything," but luckily, he turned out to be wrong (Jarvis xiii).

Vonnegut's environmental themes in his work have been unexplored. His unpopularity with the critics may have led to him not having been taken seriously when he was publishing his work. A lot of his work has been analysed from a psychoanalytic perspective, as his characters are often thought to be mentally unstable. However, more recently critics are taking notice of the environmental aspects of his work. Most recently Christina Jarvis' *Luck Mud and Other Foma: a field guide to Kurt Vonnegut's planetary citizenship* (2022), is dedicated to tracing his planetary citizenship throughout his life and work, giving an overview over the environmental themes and ideas that have been in his work throughout his career. Out of all his longer work, *Galápagos* is looked upon as "his most explicitly environmental novel" (Jarvis 5), possibly because throughout the novel the narrator continues to point out the destructive behaviours that have caused damage to the planet. Prior to writing *Galápagos*, he visited the Galápagos islands himself and found inspiration from his trip and what he saw

when he was constructing the narrative (Davis 112). Which is clear not only because of the title of the novel, but also because the whole narrative is revolved around a group of characters on their way to the Galápagos islands on a cruise ship.

*Galápagos* stages a thought experiment that explores what would happen if humanity were to evolve on an isolated island for a million years. The narrative follows the random set of events that gets a group of characters to travel to a hotel in Ecuador, headed for a cruise going to the Galápagos islands. However, a worldwide financial crisis that leads to famine and war leads almost everyone to cancel except a small group of people who happened not to get the memo and they end up at the hotel, ready to board the cruise. Among the ones who make it to the hotel are James Wait, a swindler claiming to be Canadian who is trying to marry rich widows so he can rob them; Mary Hepburn, an American widow and biology teacher; Andrew MacIntosh, a rich American financier; Selena MacIntosh, Andrew's blind daughter; Zenji Hiroguchi, a Japanese computer genius; Hisako Hiroguchi, Zenji's pregnant wife; and Adolf von Kleist, the ceremonial captain of the cruise ship, who does not actually know anything about steering a ship. As they wait for the next day, a series of accidents results in a few deaths, among them Andrew and Zenji. Another series of accidents leads to a group of six girls from a rainforest cannibal tribe called the Kanka-bono girls to end up inside the hotel, and they join the other five people when they flee to the cruise ship as the near by area is getting bombed. The ship has been stripped bare by starving locals, but before they can do anything about it, they are disconnected from land, and they head out to sea without a map, compass, or food. After days at sea, they accidentally shipwreck on the fictional Galápagos island Santa Rosalina. James suffers a heart attack on the way, so only ten people make it to the island and where they survive off the local ecosystem, expecting to be rescued at any time. However, it turns out that no one knows where they are or that they are missing. And while dealing with a possible third world war, the financial crisis, and famine, the rest of the planet is exposed to a bacterium leaving all women infertile. The people on the island end up being the only humans left who can reproduce.

The story is told by an omnipresent narrator, the ghost of Leon Trout, who looks back at these events happening in 1986 from a million years in the future where humanity still lives on the island. Leon is the son of sf writer Kilgore Trout, who is famous for being Vonnegut's alter ego and a reoccurring character in Vonnegut's work. Through his million-year perspective, he explains how the shipwrecked islanders ended up reproducing on Santa Rosalina and how they ultimately evolved over the million years to become furry seal-like creatures. Most of the narrative takes place in 1986, a year after the novel was published, but

throughout the narrative Leon compares the seal-like creatures in the future with the humans of the past. He also often remarks upon what the human species in general was doing to the planet and to each other in 1986 and how these issues do not occur anymore because humanity has turned into these harmless creatures capable of nothing more than catch food and play games. His comments are remarkably sobering in that the issues like pollution and violence are still problems humanity are facing, and in the almost forty years since its publication humanity are dealing with the same, maybe even worse, environmental issues.

The narrator's observations and comments about everything evolution has changed about the humans on the island a million years in the future gives the reader an interesting environmental perspective. I will be looking at how this novel is planetary and thinks in terms of a planetary citizenship. How it prompts readers to think differently about citizenship and belonging, giving a planetary perspective to how humanity is currently living and how we are currently acting. In terms of a planetary citizenship, this novel focuses mostly on the planetary aspect of it, which allows *Dispossessed* to fill out the citizenship aspect of a planetary citizenship more in depth.

## **I.2 Le Guin's *The Dispossessed***

*Galápagos'* focus on the planetary creates an interesting relationship with Ursula K. Le Guin's *Dispossessed*, because her focus is more on the political aspect of a society. Le Guin is an American postmodern writer who, like Vonnegut, has had an interest in environmentalism since the beginning of her career. Her father's academic career as an anthropologist lays the background for her own "holistic interest in entire cultures, actual and invented," and how she looks at these cultures "in an unswerving non-essentialist and non-ethnocentric way" (Freedman xx-xxi). I will show her interest in cultures and place also includes an interest in a planetary perspective and a planetary citizenship. Critical interest in her work is often political, which is also true for *Dispossessed* as "the political intelligence at work in *The Dispossessed* is among the subtlest" (Freedman xiv). In addition to a political interest, there is also an interest in her work from a feminist perspective, as she was already a published author by the time "second-wave feminism really began to work its revolutionary transformation in American consciousness" and her work shows her growing into these new feminist ideas (Freedman xx). There has been some interest in her environmental thinking in the early 2000s, but this seems to be an area of her work that is not explored to the extent it could have been. In this thesis I hope to start bridge this gap and frame Le Guin as an environmental thinker. I will argue that *Dispossessed* explores planetary thinking and prompts



readers to think in terms of a planetary citizenship, with much of her focus being on citizenship.

*Dispossessed* follows two societies on neighbouring planets. While these societies stem from the same place and people originally, they have had little communication for seven generations until now. The narrative follows the protagonist Shevek through a third person perspective both in present time as he arrives on the planet Urras as a guest and in past time through his life on his home planet Anarres. The past perspective revolves around Shevek's life in the anarchist society on Anarres as he becomes a physicist and shows his obstacles in trying to freely share his possibly ground-breaking theories with both Anarres and Urras. After isolating work at the institute as a theoretical physicist, Shevek falls ill. In his recovery he breaks out of his isolation and seeks company with his childhood friend Bedap, and through him he meets his partner Takver. As a famine hits the planet, Shevek leaves his position at the institute, and moves away from Takver, to do emergency famine prevention work. During his time away he is made aware of a growing hierarchy within the Anarresti society. When the famine is coming to an end, he heads back to his job at the institute only to find his position gone. His supervisor, Sabul, explains that Shevek's theoretical work in physics is not classified as essential, however, he could get his position back if he is willing to publish his work with Sabul's name on it and with his edits. Shevek declines the offer, and instead starts a rebel group with Bedap, to print his unedited work and communicate with the enemy planet Urras against the administration's advice. Their communication leads to an invitation to go to Urras, which he accepts despite warnings from the administration that he might not be allowed back due to a rule that no one is allowed to settle from Urras after the original settlement.

In present time during his visit to Urras in the state A-Io, Shevek is trying to unbuild the walls between Urras and Anarres. Little communication for generations has led to an alienation of each other's cultures and making enemies of each other. During his visit he is shielded from the suffering of the lower classes, which is who made up the original settlers on Anarres, and is only shown the good and pretty parts of the society. The A-Io government's hidden motive for funding his visit is to get a hold of Shevek's theory of time that he has been working on, they want to gain advantages over other planets by using his theories for faster than light space travel. However, Shevek wants to share his findings with everyone fairly. He runs away from the comfort of his government provided room and seeks out a resistance group that hid a note in his pocket telling him to find them. While attending a peaceful demonstration, where he speaks to the crowds, he is forced to run away again because the

government shoots at the crowd and kills many. With help he finds the Terran embassy, where he is given refuge, and he gives them his theory to share with everyone, refusing to be used to someone's advantage.

Throughout the narrative Urras' abundant ecology and its capitalist society is contrasted with the scarce ecology of Anarres and its anarchist utopian society. As the chapters alternate between the past and present, the reader gets to experience the sharp contrast between the two planets. While A-Io on Urras is abundant in nature and it seems like paradise at first, Shevek eventually discovers how the lower classes are living when he talks to his man servant who waits on him in his room. This is contrasted to Anarres' dry and barren planet, where while the nature does not have much to offer, no one is living in wealth, and all food is shared as long as there is food to share. Towards the end of the narrative Shevek discovers Anarres' hidden bureaucrats and hierarchical order within the administration in the past perspective, parallel to discovering Urras' inequalities and greed in the present time. It is through Le Guin's portrait of these societies living under very different circumstances that recontextualize what it means to be a citizen and what it means to belong somewhere. Like Vonnegut, she offers a perspective of the whole planet, however, she distances the narrative even further by putting the narrative on two planets that are not our Earth.

Vonnegut and Le Guin are two very different writers, both are writing within the beginning of the environmental movement and reflects the increasing awareness of these ideas in their work. Vonnegut being classified more often as writing dark humour and satire, while Le Guin often being represented as a politically interested writer. Both are certainly correct classifications, but in their work, there is also an interest in the planet and how the human species have been treating the planet. *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* both, I will argue, prompts thinking about citizenship in a new way. Which is especially relevant today as their warnings about unsustainable use of natural resources and pollution are coming true. Before going in depth about the critical work done on *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed*, I will be conceptualizing what thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship entails.

### **I.3 Conceptualizing Planetary Citizenship**

Sf has become a great genre for exploring human impact on the planet, like climate change, and other environmental themes. The genre, together with utopian fiction, have been "imagining progressive alternatives to the status quo, often implying critiques of contemporary conditions or possible future outcomes of current social trends. Science fiction, in particular, imagines change in terms of the whole human species" (Csicsery-Ronay 113). In

writing about alternate realities, sf writers are really discussing issues that are present in the real world right now. They often stage thought experiments where they can imagine what the outcomes of different scenarios might be. By implying critique “of contemporary conditions” in the narratives, sf authors can look at the current state of a society or the world and imagine what might change things for the better or worse if certain changes were to be or not to be made. In addition to observing “current social trends” and imagining the “possible future outcomes” they put a mirror up to society, showing readers what is happening right now, and give warnings about the consequences of certain choices. What is unique about the sf genre is that it can imagine “change in terms of the whole human species,” which gives readers a new and bigger perspective of the possible consequences and outcomes of current social trends. In *Galápagos*, when the narrator is commenting on what the human species are doing to the planet, what Vonnegut is doing is just observing what is happening right now, putting it into words for the reader to read and reflect upon. While *Galápagos* is playing with the fate of the whole human species on Earth, *Dispossessed* is contrasting the human species living on two alien planets, but both works are offering critiques of contemporary conditions by looking at the whole human species and playing with “possible future outcomes”.

These alternative representations of reality make sf the perfect genre to explore all the what ifs, especially in relation to environmental issues and climate change. Writers have since the publication of *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson and the following environmental movement been confronting “the effects of human beings on our biosphere” and have depicted “entire planets and multiple societies grappling with the problem of ‘terraforming’, that is, of how much change, intended or otherwise, to inflict on a biosphere to bend it to human needs” (Slonczewski and Levy 183). In other words, writers have been trying to communicate warnings and concerns about the human impact on the environment for a long time. *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* are both science fiction novels written around the beginning of the environmental movement and the ideas and themes in the novels shows an awareness of the gaining interest to the environment and human impact on the environment at the time.

*Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* are both have environmental themes, but they seem to have been unnoticed until more recent times. These novels are both dealing with environmental ideas that seem to be more relevant today than when they were published. As their environmental predictions and warning are coming true or getting close to coming true, their advice and perspective on these issues becomes even more relevant in contemporary times. They both offer a unique perspective on how to imagine environmental issues on a

planetary scale and prompt readers to think about citizenship and belonging in a different way. Interestingly, both novels discuss and warn against the human impact on the environment, but none of them offer apocalyptic scenarios that often are presented in narratives dealing with climate change. Instead, both narratives work to provoke the reader to think and act with the planet's best interests in mind without using fear as the main motivation for wanting to change.

The unique perspective they offer is a planetary one that deals with environmental themes on a larger scale, and it includes the whole human species. Their scale and themes are planetary in scope, which means that the novels are able to discuss ideas that go beyond the human narrative and includes the non-human aspect of life on the planet. This planetary scale goes beyond globalization, as Joseph Keith discusses in "The Novel as Planetary Form" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Novel* (2018), planetary represents an understanding of the "planet" as a global environment, one that cannot be reduced to the economic or geopolitical understandings of globalization (271). Globalization seems to exclude a large part of life on the planet because it is such a human centred term. Planetary, however, combines the human and non-human environments and perspectives, not removing the human perspective which includes globalization, but rather adding the non-human aspects of life to our understanding. Keith refers to Susan Stanford Friedman who explains that she uses the term planetary in "an epistemological sense to imply a consciousness of the earth as planet, not restricted to geopolitical formations and potentially encompassing the non-human as well as the human" (271). What is important here is that planetary means thinking about the Earth as a planet, which is not restricted to the human perspective. Thinking in planetary terms opens up the perspective to the interconnectedness of all life on the planet, putting humans within the context of all life.

The narratives in *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* are already thinking such in planetary terms in the beginning of the environmental movement, which is a reason these novels have been chosen. Within literature there has been a "planetary turn" that has been informed by an awareness and growing concern with climate change which threatens the whole planet and therefore requires a response that involves thinking in terms of the whole planet (Keith 278). Because the threat the planetary in scale, the response also needs to be planetary in scale. So, writers have been responding with narratives that includes everything that climate change affects, namely the whole planet. For example, in *Galápagos* the narrative frequently points out that humanity have not been treating the planet well, it does not limit the point of view to certain countries, but rather talks about the planet as a whole and how the human species as a

whole have not been treating the planet good. Le Guin's *Dispossessed* discusses mainly two planets, who both have a different approach to climate change. Earth like Urras have implemented environmental related laws and taxes to deal with pollution and unsustainable mining practices, while the inhabitants on Anarres, a planet made mostly of sand and rock, freely choose to live a life of scarcity and sacrifice, because their planet has so little to offer, which I will get back to in chapter two and three. But what the narrative shows with these two planets is that there is not one right way to solve climate change, but it needs to happen on a planetary scale. Thinking in terms of the planetary manages to move away from the restrictions that both globalization and cosmopolitanism bring with them (Keith 278). It opens the perspective to include the whole living ecosystem of the planet, including but not limited to the non-human aspects the ecosystem. In discussing the environment, novels are needed to both address issues on a local scale and planetary scale, because the planetary often affects the local in invisible ways, and the other way around (Keith 280). While it is presented as a rather recent trend to view novels as planetary, novels like *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* have been representing this relationship between the local and the planetary since before the ecocritics got interested in this relationship.

Having explained what it means for a novel to be planetary in scope, what then does a planetary citizenship mean? Based on Keith's explanation of planetary, it would mean a citizenship that includes the whole planet, both human and non-human. Ursula K. Heise expands on this idea of planetary by proposing a move away from a place-based thinking within the environmental movement and instead towards having a planetary perspective. In *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global* (2008), Heise argues that environmentalism needs to move away from having a sense of place to instead having a sense of planet. Instead of being too hung up on just the immediate surroundings of nature, environmentalism should work to include a bigger planetary perspective. Environmentalism needs to encourage thinking about and understanding "how a wide variety of both natural and cultural places and processes are connected and shape each other around the world" and further on how this connectedness is affected and changed by human impact (Heise 21). Focusing too much on place leaves out an understanding of how all these places are connected in a larger planetary ecosystem and how they affect each other. It is especially important to be aware of how humans impact these processes both on a local and planetary level. However, she does not call for a total abandonment of place-based thinking. Having an awareness of local ecology is still relevant because it leads to questions about how the local ecology affects the global one and such inquiries "open the local out into a network of

ecological links that span a region, a continent, or the world” (Heise 56). For example, in *Dispossessed*, in the past perspective when the protagonist Shevek is on his home planet he visits a park when he is about to start work at the institute. While in a park, looking at the non-native trees from Urras he starts to question how much resources it takes on this barren planet to keep them alive, compared to a native tree (Le Guin 696). On Anarres resources like water and good soil are precious. His observations about the local makes him ask larger questions that affect much more than just this park. All the water it takes to keep a non-native tree alive and thriving in this harsh environment could be used better. However, Shevek’s planetary thinking, requires learning to think differently, which is a process.

Having a sense of planet requires thinking about culture and belonging in a new way. Heise explains that for environmental thinking, the challenge lies in moving away from having “the core of its cultural imagination” in a sense of place, to instead thinking in terms of “a less territorial and more systemic sense of planet.” (56). In other words, it means thinking beyond the human made boundaries of countries and instead learn to think about the planet as something that is made up of many smaller ecosystems that together make up the planet. Le Guin shows the ability to think beyond the territorial sense of place in the creation of Anarres in *Dispossessed*. The planet is not divided into countries or areas that anyone considers themselves citizens of, instead, they all move freely around the planet, not feeling any particular ownership towards any place. This means that when there is need for more work force anywhere, people from around the planet has no issue helping, because they consider themselves to be loyal to the planet and their people, not to any place divided up to form a country.

Heise argues that this planetary focus does not mean that environmentalism should embrace all aspects of globalization with open arms, instead thinking in terms of a sense of planet is “a call to ground any such discourses in a thorough cultural and scientific understanding of the global,” she calls this an “environmentally oriented cosmopolitanism,” or as she explains Patrick Hayden calls it “world environmental citizenship” (59). Heise, like Keith, separates globalization from planetary, but only in that globalization is too limited and that planetary expands upon the scope of globalization to both include a cultural and scientific understanding of the planet. Heise explains that what she calls “eco-cosmopolitanism” is “an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary “imagined communities” of both human and nonhuman kinds” (61). The human aspect of the planetary is a big part of our understanding, especially because humanity lives in most places on the planet and have been able to alter so much of the planet’s ecosystems. But the scientific understanding of the

global, with an understanding of the interconnectedness of the ecosystems are equally important when moving towards thinking in planetary terms. While cosmopolitanism imagines that everyone is part of one large community, Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism attempts to envision that both human and non-human are a part of the planetary "imagined communities" combining both the cultural and scientific understanding of what the global is. In *Dispossessed* on the planet Anarres, as mentioned, they seem to be loyal to the whole planet and their people, you could say that they are imagining themselves as part of a planetary imagined community. And while it is a dry and barren planet, meaning that there is almost no plant or animal life there, they are never shown to be disruptive to the little vegetation that grows there, and they are very careful in their use of renewable energy. In other words, they include both the human and the non-human in their sense of community, never working to take over nature in favour of something only humans benefit from.

This "eco-cosmopolitanism" or "world environmental citizenship" is what I will use to build upon a planetary citizenship. Imagining oneself as part of a planetary imagined community which includes both the human and non-human, or in imagining oneself as a world environmental citizen, is what leads to thinking about citizenship and belonging differently. Meaning, once one can imagine oneself as part of a larger community that is not restricted by the borders of a country, that is when one is moving towards being a citizen of the planet. To always has the best interest of both the human and non-human in mind, that is how one can work towards a planetary citizenship. Before moving on there is a part of planetary citizenship that Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism does not quite cover, and that is the more personal aspect that involves how to think in terms of a planetary citizenship.

A planetary citizenship requires opening oneself up to a new way of thinking about the environment and the planet. Which Heise's planetary perspective covers, but Timothy Morton takes this further in his exploration of thinking that he calls "the ecological thought." A planetary citizenship does not only require imagining yourself as part of a planetary imagined community, but it also includes shifting the way you think about yourself and the environment. Morton suggests that thinking ecologically does not just include thinking about the non-human, it also includes thinking about the human, because "[h]umans are each others' environment" (2623). Including both the human and the non-human when thinking ecologically or about the planetary, is something both Keith and Heise discuss. Morton takes it further and explains that part of the problem is the kind of thinking that avoids thinking about the totality, that avoid thinking about the whole picture (2623). He even goes as far as arguing that there might be a need to think beyond the totality. Because if this totality is

something that is a closed off way of thinking, if it is something known and something we can be sure of and something that does not change, then we need to think beyond this totality (Morton 2623). What Morton does is make clear that a planetary perspective needs to always be open to new interpretations, a problem arises when one imagines that there is only one way to see the totality. He wants ecological thinking to remain open for new impressions and truths, because what we think we know for a fact is constantly changing and ecological thinking needs to be open for this.

Thinking in terms of Morton's the ecological thought needs to be practiced. Morton explains, like Heise's planetary perspective, "*The ecological thought* is the thinking of interconnectedness" (2625). It requires thinking about how the local is connected to the planetary and how the planetary affects the local. However, the next step in thinking the ecological thought requires more practice, Morton argues that "The ecological thought doesn't just occur "in the mind." It's a practise and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings – animals, vegetable, or mineral" (2625). Changing the way one thinks, either in terms of the ecological thought, or in terms of a planetary citizenship, requires conscious effort to change how one thinks. It takes time both to learn how all of these non-human aspects are connected with each other and how they are connected to the human, and it requires practice to integrate this knowledge into your way of thinking about yourself and the planet. For example, in *Dispossessed*, Shevek is an example of someone who has grown up thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. When he then travels to Urras and meets a pet otter for the first time, he refers to the animal as "brother" (Le Guin 736). Instinctively connecting with the animal, because he does not see himself as more worth than this animal.

One of the most important parts of the ecological thought in terms of a planetary citizenship is how this way of thinking requires the individual to open themselves up. Morton explains that "[t]hinking the ecological thought is difficult: it involves becoming open, radically open – open forever, without the possibility of closing again" (2626). What he suggests is that the ecological thought is something that once you open yourself to thinking this way there will be no going back, because once it is open there is no way to close it (2623). It means learning to think in a way that you cannot unlearn, just like you cannot unsee some truth once you have seen it. He explains that "[i]t isn't *like* thinking about where your toilet waste goes. It *is* thinking about where your toilet waste goes" (2627). In other words, the ecological thought includes thinking about all the hidden parts of life that you might not have questioned or noticed before. Asking questions about where the toilet waste goes and



what happens to trash after you have put it in the right bin. For example, when Shevek is exploring his room in A-Io on Urras when he first arrives, he is fascinated by the unlimited access to water in the sink in the bathroom and when he thinks about how much water the toilet uses to flush, he asks “But what became of the shit?” (Le Guin 667). Having grown up thinking about all aspects of life, when he then meets a foreign environment, he still asks these questions because he has been opened to this way of thinking. And because he has opened himself up to this way of thinking, it does not stop when he arrives on a different planet. However, most people would not even think about questioning these basic aspects of life, which is why it is a difficult change to make. But once it is done, there is no way of not thinking about such questions again. This questioning of things that have previously been taken for granted that is a key part of a planetary citizenship.

Planetary citizenship is a way to imagine oneself as part of larger planetary imagined communities, in addition to being a way of thinking about the environment on a planetary scale that involves thinking about both the human and the non-human. It is not an easily defined term, but rather an idea to strive towards. There might not be a way to achieve a perfect planetary citizenship but working towards thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is what the goal should be. Planetary citizenship requires redefining or adding to one's idea of citizenship and belonging, including a sense of being a part of a planetary community. Belonging to something more than the imagined borders of a country and including both the human and non-human into your understanding of community. Further on, it also involves opening yourself up and learning truths that cannot be unlearned, asking the questions one has not thought to ask before to get a better planetary perspective. What I will argue, then, is that both Vonnegut and Le Guin are environmental thinkers and that they think in terms of a planetary citizenship in *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed*. I will show how the novels, being planetary in scope, prompt readers to think about the interconnectedness of the planet and how the planetary is connected to the local and the other way around. Further on, I will show how the narratives reconceptualize what it means to be a citizen and what it means to belong. To begin I will be exploring the critical work that has been done on *Galápagos*, focusing on the ones that have an environmental focus.

## Chapter One: on Vonnegut

### 1.0 Introduction

Kurt Vonnegut's environmentalism has not been picked up until more recent times as the interest in ecocritical readings have increased. What I will do in this chapter is look at three different critics' approach to Vonnegut and *Galápagos*. The first one, Todd F. Davis staples Vonnegut as a postmodern humanist, and in his analysis of Vonnegut's deep interest in humanity, he also hints at some of the environmental themes in the novel. The second one, Christina Jarvis, sets out to frame Vonnegut as a planetary citizen and gives an overview over the environmental themes that can be found in his work, including *Galápagos*. The last one, Andrew John Hicks, approach Vonnegut from a posthumanist perspective and gives some interesting observations about the environmental themes in *Galápagos*. In the last subsection in this chapter, I will be comparing the critics and explore what themes and ideas are the most relevant for a planetary citizenship.

### 1.1 *Galápagos* from a Postmodern Humanist Perspective

While Vonnegut's environmental themes have not been a focus until recently, there are mentions of some of these ideas in earlier analyses of his work. Todd F. Davis' book *Kurt Vonnegut's Crusade; or, How a Postmodern Harlequin Preached a New Kind of Humanism* (2006), focuses primary on what Davis calls Vonnegut's postmodern humanism in his work. With postmodern humanism Davis refers to "a position that affirms humanistic values while maintaining a postmodern perspective" (29). Davis explains that while a modernist humanist wants to improve or perfect humanity because of the unique and univocal of each individual's self, a postmodern humanist, on the other hand, "wishes to better the human condition because of the relative worth of all life and the potential that such life may hold in its proliferation of multiplicities" (32). Another example is that for a modern humanist "the focus was utopia, an end result based on the belief in the perfectibility of humanity," however, for a postmodern humanist the focus is not utopia because "there can be no utopia, only endless play, endless affirmation of life" (Davis 32). Davis explains that he thinks Vonnegut centres his discourse on postmodern humanism, meaning that "from this vantage he applauds any action that enhances life and condemns any action that causes suffering or destruction of life" (33-34). Though Davis does not say it, Vonnegut's postmodern humanism have a lot of similarities with thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. As a result, in Davis' analysis of *Galápagos* he points to environmental aspects of the novel. In this subsection I will be looking at Davis' arguments about Vonnegut's humanism, in addition to point out some of the environmental themes Davis picks up in his reading.

Davis' observations about Vonnegut after having analysed all his longer works, including *Galápagos*, reveals how despite everything Vonnegut remained completely devoted to humanity. There remains a hopefulness to his works, not a blind hope because Vonnegut is not afraid to tell the truth as it is. Davis observes how Vonnegut wants to serve his readers and therefore wants to create fiction that will give them something more than just a good story, which "requires nerves of steel" (136). He does not just write for the sake of writing, Vonnegut wants the work to be worth the reader's time. As he is telling these stories the evidence against humanity keeps building up, Vonnegut nevertheless keeps believing in the fiction he creates, believing in the hope he writes about (138). Davis argues that within the centre of his postmodern humanism is the idea that "life is precious and that the very attempt should be made to improve the condition of our planet in order to preserve life" (138). Despite Vonnegut's own pessimism, his postmodern humanism allows him to see the value in all life and how one should still work to save the planet before it is too late. Davis describes Vonnegut as a social prophet who hopes that his stories will somehow change a dark reality (137).

In his analysis of *Galápagos*, Davis focuses mostly on the nature of the ending and its ambiguous meaning, while hinting at some environmental aspects of the novel. In the chapter "Apocalyptic Grumbling: Postmodern Righteousness in the Late Novels" in the subsection "*Galápagos*: A Pleasant Devolution," Davis argues that in the later novels Vonnegut has been observing humanity for a long time and in seeing all our flaws, *Galápagos* reflects a "growing ambivalence about the importance of humanity" (112). There seems to be tension between an idealized image of what we view as humanity's greatest achievements and the more brutal reality of the destruction humanity is actually capable of (112). Davis identifies a dilemma that the narrative presents between the idea that while humanity achieves harmony with nature by evolving into seal-like creatures with smaller brains, comes at the cost of what makes us so interesting (112). The concern over the loss of everything that makes humans interesting, meaning the creativity our brains allow, seems to be the main issue Davis is debating and the implications of such an end to humanity as we know it today. From Davis' point of view, Vonnegut's main observation seems to be that while humanity has done a lot of impressive things, by our own human set standard. However, humankind also seems to be a very destructive species overall. What Davis finds in *Galápagos* is that in Vonnegut's search for a less destructive humanity, he also evolves away everything that makes us interesting as a species, and possibly evolves away everything that makes us human. However, Davis questions whether Vonnegut has crossed a line when he destroys "the very thing that makes

us most human” (112), meaning our relatively large brains, in hopes of saving humanity. What he argues Vonnegut does is act “as a postmodern prophet washed ashore to warn us of our potential destruction” (112). Though Davis does not go in depth about what this “potential destruction” is or is caused by, it seems to be implied that it is a destruction that humanity is responsible for, which may include climate change and environmental consequences for human actions. All in all, in the evolution of humankind, Davis reads an ambivalence in Vonnegut’s opinion of the usefulness of our culture because what we define as human features are removed.

An essential part of *Galápagos* is its scientific accuracy when it comes to how Vonnegut evolves humanity to seal-like creatures. In the evolution of humanity, Vonnegut turns to Darwin himself and his theory of evolution, and fittingly have the main group of characters evolve on a fictional Galápagos island. Davis argues that what makes the narrative both effective and believable is that the scientific theory is real and presented as such, because it establishes authenticity within the text (113). While Vonnegut could have done something wilder, like make humanity grow random wings or two heads, he instead chooses to go for a more realistic set of events that leads more realistic mutations over a large span of time. With the scientific knowledge, Vonnegut presents an alternate reality, a world where human happiness is much simpler to achieve, due to the changed nature of humanity (114). Building upon the scientific background, Vonnegut produce a story that ultimately leads to a new existence for humankind. A million years in the future, natural evolution has run its course and we find a human species that is content and in harmony with nature, but this comes at the cost of many typical human traits, like our large brains that makes us capable of creativity and intelligence. What makes this narrative so interesting is that there is a sense of logic behind the construction of this alternate reality and a natural progression towards the future that feel believable.

The evolution to a creature that does not resemble the current human species is an aspect of the novel that has some divided opinions. In dealing with the nature of what Vonnegut does to the human brain, Davis refers to Leonard Mustazza and his argument that, nature becomes the one to correct the mistake of humanity’s big brains that makes ethical evil possible because nature was the one who gave them the organ in the first place, so by correcting the mistake humanity once again aligns more with all the rest of the mammalian kingdom (114). Davis explains that Mustazza’s argument suggests that it is our evolved brain structure that is the cause of our ethical dilemmas, however, Davis explains that while part of *Galápagos* can support such a reading, Vonnegut would not be entirely happy with such a

conclusion (114). There is no direct link between ethical evil and the size of our brain, though Leon's narration makes it seem this way at times. The view that it is the size of the brain that causes ethical evil is to simplify the matter. However, it is this juxtaposition of between "the ethical dimension of human existence and the purely biological dimension of human existence and the purely biological dimension of animal existence" that "generate the divisive energy that makes *Galápagos* such an interesting postmodern novel" (Davis 114). Meaning that it is the comparison between the ethical choices that humans make and what the biological part of the human body allows us to do. Who is really at fault for the bad choices? Is it evolution's fault for giving humanity brains that are capable of complex thought? Or is it the individuals at fault for choosing to act this way? Without the brain humanity would not be able to make these choices, but with the brain one is not forced to make these choices. There is no simple answer as to what the meaning of the smaller brains in the future might be, and it is this oppositional nature of the different positions that makes the novels what it is. This interesting divisive energy of the novel is connected to how it remains unclear in the end if the devolution leads to a loss of what makes human life mysteriously free, or if the seal like creatures without our mental capacity for ethical evil is to be "preferred to our current state of affairs" (Davis 114). Because "our current state of affairs" is so bad, Vonnegut seems to be suggesting that while the preferred solution is unclear, anything might be better than where we are at the moment.

Looking for meaning in Vonnegut's evolution of humankind, Davis quotes Vonnegut in an interview about *Galápagos* where Vonnegut explains that "having seen where we're headed, I don't want to go that way anymore" (114). It is clear that Vonnegut wants to distance himself from the problems the human species has caused such as war and atomic disasters, and anything seems to be better than what is happening now (Davis 114). Vonnegut has seen so much disaster to be caused by humanity that he concludes that it is the complexity of thought that humans are capable of that so often leads to our own destruction (Davis 114). What Vonnegut has then done with *Galápagos* is draw on his own trip to the Galápagos Islands and model his idea of what human happiness could look like, finding inspiration in the seals he saw peacefully and joyfully playing (Davis 114). Therefore, within the context of a planet that has been made unfit for much of the mammalian life, which includes humans, by wars and murder, Vonnegut concludes that life as seals is a very attractive option to what is currently going on (114). What Davis is essentially pointing out is how aware Vonnegut was of the environmental destruction that has been going on. Observing how humanity has made the planet unliveable both for other species but also for our own in many places and use this

as a cause for trying to eliminate the threat that humanity cause to the planet. Though Davis does not dwell on these environmental issues, he does observe them and mention how these issues might have affected Vonnegut's choice in changing the human species so drastically. And in seeing everything humankind is doing wrong, Vonnegut finds that seal life might be better, compared to what humanity is currently doing.

Turning to the characters in the novel, their best and worst traits are used to demonstrate that changing the current path is possible. Davis argues that in order to maintain an idea of hope in the novel, Vonnegut builds a case against humanity's current status quo by giving the main group of characters the worst evolutionary traits in contemporary humanity and some of the best, and then through devolution "eradicate the worst traits while normalizing the best" (115). One of the first characters we meet is James Wait, the swindler, who is "Nature's experiment with purposeless greed," while the narrator's mother is "Nature's experiment with optimism" (115), because she remained positive even in bad situations. And a million years in the future, this purposeless greed is no longer possible because of the reduced brain capacity. And all that is left is a more content, possibly happier existence. In showing the worst traits disappear and making the good one the new normal, Davis finds Vonnegut's hope. In identifying these traits and there lies a hope in recognising these traits in present time and finding ways to change and focus on the good ones.

In his analysis of Vonnegut's humanism, Davis argues that the narrator Leon is embarrassed about how humanity is treating each other and the Earth (115). Leon's feelings towards humanity can be seen in his recounting of his father Kilgore Trout's novel *The Era of Hopeful Monsters*. The novel is about humanoids on another planet, who have ignored their most pressing survival problems until the last minute and are eventually starting to have mutated babies who might show themselves to be better planetary citizens than the humanoids. As usual of Kilgore Trout's stories, his novel is "nothing more than a sermon offered up by Vonnegut to turn us from our destructive and unethical ways" (Davis 115). Kilgore Trout is famously Vonnegut's alter ego, and this fictional novel feels like Vonnegut saying very directly to the reader his opinion about what he thinks about how humanity have been treating the Earth. While Vonnegut's opposition to war has often been Davis' focus, he makes sure to mention the embarrassment of how humans have treated the Earth too.

While Vonnegut fixes the issues presented in Kilgore's novel with the Darwinian theory of evolution, however in solving the problems related to moral error, Davis argues that he also destroys "what makes us human" (116). He explains that "[w]ithout choice, human morality ceases to have meaning. Without our capacity for rational thought, many would

argue, human life ceases all together” (116). In the end, Davis argues, what is left of humanity might not be human at all. While the problems related to moral evil is fixed, it is not fixed in a way that makes for a satisfying ending. So, what is the point of solving the problem and saving humanity from its doom when in the end they are no longer humans. Davis therefore suggests that the devolution into seals is not conclusion that satisfies Vonnegut. Which is why, despite all the reasons not to, Vonnegut keeps advocating for humankind (116). He keeps wanting to save humanity, believing that they are ultimately good. This belief in humankind is clear in the narrator’s rejection of his father when he comes to guide Leon into the afterlife. His father goes on a long rant about all the bad aspects of humanity, however, Leon chooses to believe that humanity is ultimately good and wants to stay on Earth and follow humanity for the next million years (Davis 116-117). At the end of the million years, waiting for his father to come back after the promised million years, having watched how humanity has changed its course and that the threat of a new world war disappears, and the financial crisis is no longer an issue, Leon concludes that his optimistic mother was right, that “[e]ven in the darkest times, there really was still hope for humankind” (Davis 117). He holds on to the hope he learned from his mother despite his father’s very convincing case against humanity, and after watching them change for a million years he concludes that there is indeed hope for them.

In the end the reader is left wondering which life is better. Is the future seal-like creature better because they are harmless with only the most basic biological features or is the present time humanity better despite our intellectual capacity that can threaten our own existence and everything around us (Davis 117). Davis concludes that *Galápagos*’ ending “really solves nothing” (118). What Vonnegut does instead of coming up with the big solution to all our problems is satirize “our current condition with brutal honesty” (Davis 118). But Davis never seems to find much purpose to the evolved humankind and leaves it at that. However, Davis notes that Vonnegut never loses sight of the most important message in what he calls Vonnegut’s sermon, namely humanity (118). Davis explains that regardless of its brooding darkness, “it is only fitting that Vonnegut choose the words of Anne Frank for the epigraph of *Galápagos*, because like Frank, Vonnegut remains a committed humanist who must say, “In spite of everything, I still believe people are really good at heart”” (118). Overall, throughout humanity’s danger to itself and others, Vonnegut remains a humanist who believe there is still hope for change.

In exploring Vonnegut’s humanism, Davis picks up some environmental themes. The biggest one he picks up is how it is embarrassing how badly we treat each other and the earth.

The points he makes about Vonnegut's humanism and the few environmental themes he picks up is a great starting point in discussing his environmentalism further on. As Heise's planetary imagined communities and Morton's the ecological thought points out, thinking ecologically or in terms of a planetary citizenship, includes both the human and the non-human. And though Davis does not pay much attention to the non-human, except our treatment of the Earth, he does underline Vonnegut's deep interest in humanity and hopes of saving it.

### **1.2 Galápagos from an Environmental Perspective**

One of the newest analyses of Kurt Vonnegut's work, similar to Davis', is from Christina Jarvis' *Lucky Mud and Other Foma: A Field Guide to Kurt Vonnegut's Environmentalism and Planetary Citizenship* (2022), where she is focuses on what Davis touches upon in passing in his look on *Galápagos*, namely finding and exploring Vonnegut's environmental thinking in his works. Like Davis she explores all of his longer works, in addition to some of his shorter ones. In this subchapter, I will lay out her main observations of *Galápagos*, as well as some of her observations of Vonnegut's second novel *The Sirens of Titan* (1959) because it will be useful later. But first, I will explain her use of the term planetary citizenship, and how she is using this term to explore Vonnegut's work.

The book is dedicated to exploring both Vonnegut's life and his literary works, where Jarvis exposes both his loved for the planet and how this environmentalism seeps through his works from the very start of his career until the end. The image most have previously had of Vonnegut is of a pessimistic "chain-smoking prophet of the apocalypse," however what they have missed is that under the surface pessimism one can find strong beliefs of planetary citizenship and a belief in the importance of environmental engagement (Jarvis xiii). While Vonnegut used the term "planetary citizen" himself, he used it to talk about artists and cosmopolitan thinkers who had work that went beyond the boundaries of countries, Jarvis explains that she will consider Vonnegut's planetary citizenship in "broad environmental and social justice terms" (xvi). In exploring Vonnegut's planetary citizenship, Jarvis explains that one needs to look at "both his global and local perspectives" and his "warnings about climate change, species extinction, and planetary apocalypse," in addition to "his quiet meditations about places, communities, and everyday interactions" (xvi). Similar to Heise's planetary perspective, one needs to look at his global or planetary perspectives as well as his looks at the local. Jarvis also considers more typical environmental topics in his works such as climate change and related ideas. Jarvis' exploration of his planetary perspectives and the mixture between human and non-human aspects of the planet, certainly fits into both Heise's ideas and



Morton's thinking in terms of the ecological thought, that I have argued makes up a planetary citizenship.

While I will be focusing mostly on her environmental findings in *Galápagos*, I will also look at some of her comments about *Sirens of Titan* because her findings can be applied to *Dispossessed*. What makes Vonnegut's work such an important contribution to environmental literature is that he manages to put "tension between providing hope, comfort, imagination, and agency for humanity and nakedly telling the truth about all the ways we are damaging the planet, ourselves, and other life forms" (xix). Vonnegut's writing as a planetary citizen, then, walks a fine line between proving hope for possible change while at the same time observing the world as it is. There is also a fine line between telling the truth and scaring readers with a very bleak picture of reality. It is this balance that Vonnegut manages to walk nicely and never leaning too much in any direction.

Her main argument is Vonnegut's planetary citizenship can be traced back to his childhood and is a running theme throughout all of his longer work. Most of his writing encourages thinking about environmental issues and Vonnegut himself was deeply interested in the planet and encouraging people to take action to save the planet. Jarvis' exploration of his childhood and how his planetary citizenship came to be, allows her to show where his environmental thinking started and how it evolved throughout his life. The book works as an overview over his environmental thinking in his work, but there is still room to go more in depth and explore these themes more, which I will do later in my discussion on *Galápagos*.

His second novel *Sirens of Titan* shows an early interest in environmental themes that would later become more mainstream. *Sirens of Titan* is important in this discussion because Vonnegut anticipates environmental metaphors that came to popularity in the 1960s rise of the environmental movement, as for example "Spaceship Earth" and the view of Earth as an interconnected "global village," and the novel encourages planetary thinking by emphasizing how all of humanity deals with shared problems and by presenting the reader with "an opportunity to think about your native planet from a fresh and beautifully detached viewpoint" (Jarvis 44). *Sirens of Titan* is essentially about the richest and luckiest man in America, Malachi Constant, and the novel follows his losses and interstellar adventures, and he eventually ends up settling on one of Saturn's moons (Jarvis 44). While parodying the science fiction space-opera, it also "offers important environmental planetary visions as characters contemplate tiny, fragile Earth and its place in the vast universe" (Jarvis 44). This being his second novel, it is very interesting how he already presents so many of these environmental ideas in the beginning of the environmental movement. What is so interesting

is that *Sirens of Titan* presents humans both as biological agents who has the ability to change both our own and other planets, before the term Anthropocene was proposed, and as just one humble species out of many in the universe (Jarvis 44-45). It works to defamiliarize humanity from our own planet through an alien perspective (Jarvis 45). Very early in his writing career does he show his planetary perspective and how he thinks in terms of a planetary citizenship.

In writing about other planets Vonnegut underlines that what he is really talking about is our own planet. Vonnegut explains in an interview that “every time I write about another planet, it is deliberately so unrealistic that people can’t really believe in it. In a way it makes our own planet more important, more real” (Jarvis 45). In presenting alien planets, Vonnegut is highlighting our own planet. Which is what he is doing in *Galápagos* as well. Though he is not discussing other planets, he is discussing the entirety of our own planet and coming at it an evolutionary perspective. And in discussing a future that feels unrealistic to the reader because they will not be alive to ever witness such a future even if it were to happen, it highlights the issues Leon is discussing about the present human species that the reader recognise. In other words, it is not the unrealistic future that is the focus, but in writing about it he discusses more relevant issues about our current condition.

Jarvis argues that *Galápagos* “is fundamentally about the human species and the promises and perils of human nature” (73). What makes *Galápagos* so interesting is that it is, as Jarvis notes, his most environmental novel (73). While his other novels have environmental themes, like *Sirens of Titan*’s contemplation of humanity’s place in the universe, *Galápagos*’ main themes and topics are very clearly environmental. Which is why Davis in his discussion of Vonnegut’s humanism also picks up some of the environmental themes. The narrative itself is a large-scale experiment with time to explore both hopes and fears for the planet’s future (Jarvis 73). Jarvis explains that the novel is able to tackle topics related to environmentalism because it is grounded in science (73). She explains that *Galápagos* “simultaneously employs Darwin’s theories of natural selection with scientific integrity while critiquing social Darwinism” (73). Just like his comment about how writing about other planets is a method for him to write about our own planet, this thought experiment about the future is a method to think about our present time. The novel’s narrator shows the reader what the human species looks like one million years into the future, and discovers that humankind has evolved dramatically from our current form (Jarvis 74). However, all other species in on Earth has not changed in a significant way, which underlines that “it’s our species that needs to contemplate its planetary role” (Jarvis 74). This outcome highlights how the novel is really about humanity and humanity’s role in the larger planetary ecosystem. And then having our species be the

only one who needs to adapt better to their environment, shows how other species do not really have anything big that they need to change. The narrative explores both positive and negative aspects of humanity and what the consequences this has led to and might lead to in the future.

The narrative allows the reader to imagine the future without the human species as the dominant species. The narrator, the ghost of Leon Trout, narrates his story about what happened to humanity from a million years in the future. As a ghost he remembers both his time alive and after death he follows the main group of characters around while also making general comments about humanity (Jarvis 74). His ghostly existence, or nonexistence, allows for a unique perspective, he sees the destructive tendencies of humanity from the future where humanity has evolved into harmless creatures. What he sees is that humanity has changed almost beyond recognition. Meaning that there was a lot about the human species that was not the best suited to live with nature. After a million years humanity is no longer taking over the entire planet, because as the main land humans eventually died off, the only human population lives on the island.

In the narrative, Vonnegut observes what has led to the ecological damage. Jarvis argues that “Vonnegut assigns both particular and species-level blame for these widespread ecological woes” (75). During his million years of observation, where the most focus is placed on what humanity was like in 1986 when the narrative in the novel takes place, the narrator points out how both particular types of people were not being considerate of the environment, but also how sometimes it is not anybody’s fault, but rather the fault of the species itself. Vonnegut places blame on certain individuals and on a certain type of person, while also pointing out how the species as a whole are causing problems. One of the particular people who is given blame in the novel is Andrew MacIntosh, the rich American financier, who does not make it to Santa Rosalina but who we follow while he is at the hotel. Throughout the narrative we learn certain things about him and his businesses, for example, the narrator explains that MacIntosh has a “mania for claiming as his own property as many of the planet’s life-supporting systems of possible” and that he “found ensuring the survival of the human race a total bore” (Jarvis 75). And while his companies are “notorious damagers of the water or the soil or the atmosphere,” MacIntosh presents himself as “an ardent conservationist” (Jarvis 75). This is not a critique of just MacIntosh, but also a critique of the rich upper class whose actions and words does not add up. People who talk about saving the environment and preserving it, but then invests in companies who pollute and do not care about where they dump their waste. While he is blaming rich people who do not care about

the environment, to some extent the blame is also in the species as a whole who in general has not cared about harming the environment, before now.

The novel deals with themes of being a part of nature and are ruled by nature's laws despite being able to alter our environment. Though *Galápagos* was published fifteen years before the term Anthropocene was suggested for the current geological epoch (Jarvis 73), the novel "suggests that although we have become geological agents capable of altering the planet on a large scale," humans are still "governed by the same natural laws and life-supporting systems that affect all species" (Jarvis 76). Throughout the narrative the narrator makes comments about all the issues that humans have caused. For example, the financial problems that leads to famine, because as the narrator explains, there was enough food to go around, but because the imaginary value of money suddenly changed, people could no longer buy food (Vonnegut 579). However, it is not these human made problems that ends up killing off the humans on the mainland. Instead, a nature caused humans to lose their ability to reproduce by exposing them to a bacterium in the water makes it impossible for women to have children (Jarvis 76). Despite spending the majority of the novel to comment on all the issues humanity is causing and how destructive they can be, in the end, it is something outside their control that wipes them out. To choose this way of getting rid of most of humanity, shows how despite being capable of "altering the planet on a large scale," nature is still able to affect the species on a large scale, just like any other species is vulnerable illnesses that occur. In a way, showing that humanity is not above the rules of nature after all.

The focus of the narrative is not on the future creatures and their harmless existence. Jarvis argues that "the novel is fundamentally about modern *Homo sapiens* and our dangers to ourselves and the planet," which is why the narrative focuses relatively little on the successors to our species in the future (77). The narrative focuses mainly on the events happening in the narrator's past and only gives comments and small episodes from the future. The narrative is set up in a way that allows the narrator to compare the present-day humans with the harmless creatures a million years in the future to make a point about current human behaviour. The reader does not get a full picture of what the future life looks like because the narrator reveals things about them trait by trait throughout the narrative which forces readers to "contemplate the deep time of evolution and geology" (Jarvis 77-78). Jarvis argues that Vonnegut's primary concern is "to explore the ways natural selection as put destructive human characteristics in check" (77-78). For example, how humanity can no longer destroy each other with weapons because they no longer have fingers to handle the weapons (Vonnegut 673). And the reason for wanting to put these characteristics in check is because as Leon comments "this was a very

innocent planet, except for those great big brains” (Jarvis 78). Vonnegut’s exploration of ways natural selection could possibly make humanity more innocent leads him to wipe out humans on the mainland and as humans lose features “such as large brains and dexterous hands, that have enabled destructive technologies and institutions” (Jarvis 78) he discovered a species that is no longer capable of altering nature on a planetary level. In exploring what might make humanity less harmful for the environment, he points out all the traits that makes us destructive and contemplates what humanity is using our skills to accomplish in the present.

While offering a rather bleak picture of all of humanity’s faults and a completely changed humanity in the future, *Galápagos* still manages to offer hope about the road ahead. Jarvis argues that in the end “*Galápagos* is a remarkably optimistic novel” (79). Despite the narrator explaining all the benefits of the harmless future creatures, Jarvis argues that “Vonnegut’s real hope is that we will heed nature’s warnings and adopt the planetary thinking needed to bring about the change on our own” (79). Similar to Heise’s call for a sense of planet, Jarvis points out how Vonnegut’s work points out how humanity need to think in a planetary perspective. Throughout the narrative, Leon comments about everything that is bad about humanity, however, towards the end when his father shows up to guide him into the afterlife just as the cruise ship is about to reach the island, Leon chooses to stay. His pessimistic father, sci-fi writer Kilgore Trout, goes on a rant about everything there is to despise humanity for, but Leon rejects his request to join him in the afterlife, and therefore also rejecting his father’s pessimistic outlook on humanity (Jarvis 79). Because in the end Leon believes, like his mother, that humanity is ultimately good, despite all their current track record. Jarvis argues that Vonnegut’s hope, “lies in countering our destructive behaviours with regenerative, selfless, and imaginative ones” (79). By pointing out what humanity are doing wrong, the hope is that there might be enough people who chooses to change in time to save the planet and humanity from either a human or nature caused disaster. As Davis also concludes in the last subsection, in Leon rejecting his father, the narrative portrays a hopeful message.

What Jarvis does in her book, then, is give an overview Vonnegut’s work and his planetary citizenship. His planetary citizenship revolves around how he prompts readers to think in a planetary perspective and inspire actions that might help climate change. In *Sirens of Titan*, he uses unrealistic presentations of other planets to give Earth more focus. His most environmental novel *Galápagos* works as a warning or cautionary tale, hoping to inspire change before it is too late. Jarvis uses Vonnegut’s planetary citizenship to explain where these ideas come from and how his environmentalism encourages planetary thinking and

environmental thinking in his readers. Jarvis, like Davis, finds that ultimately Vonnegut has a deep commitment to the human species. While Vonnegut shows a future of seal-like creatures that are finally harmless, the point of *Galápagos* is to inspire change before such a future becomes the only solution. Vonnegut's planetary citizenship and commitment to humanity allows him, especially in *Galápagos*, to talk honestly about humanity today while at the same time hope for a better future.

### 1.3 *Galápagos* from a Posthumanist perspective

While the other critics find that there is a hope for the future of humanity, another finds that there might also be a hope in a future after humanity. In *Posthumanism in the Novels of Kurt Vonnegut: Matter that Complains so*, Andrew John Hicks takes a new look at Vonnegut's work from a posthumanist perspective. In the section "Environment and Evolution" in the chapter "*Galápagos*: Writing on Air" he takes looks at the novel from a mixture of an environmental perspective and a posthuman perspective. In his exploration of *Galápagos*, the posthuman perspective looks at what comes after humanity itself. In this section I will explore his most interesting findings and what there is to gain from his insights.

In the grand scheme of things, human society as it is now will not last forever. Hicks argues that in *Galápagos*, "Vonnegut dares to imagine that what we have now is ephemeral, in the face of the grinding determinative process and timescales of natural selection, and that what may come after us may have no need for what we consider most sacred" (18-19). What *Galápagos* manages to do is create a narrative so big in timescale that the reader can see the effects of natural selection and we therefore see how our current society and state of humanity occupies a relatively small part of time. In imagining what comes after life as we know it today, it comes as no surprise that what we value now might not be valued in the future. Vonnegut puts away the human-centric mindset and imagines what life could be when humanity is no longer the dominant species on the planet. Hicks argues that *Galápagos* "may not be traditionally aesthetically satisfying, but its richly paradoxical status (as literary artefact that problematizes the very existence of culture itself) is nevertheless able to gesture towards, though never fully portray, a form of life radically different to our own" (111). What makes the novel interesting, then, is not necessarily an interesting plot, but rather the paradoxical nature of the narrative. Though it depicts a future for humanity, it does not fully explore it in detail, this life that is so different from our own is only hinted towards, never fully fleshed out.

Read in the context of what humanity turns out to become, Vonnegut's use of natural selection is more advanced than what it might seem at first glance. Hicks argues that

*Galápagos* “is more provocative when its posthuman future is read as neither a *progression* towards utopia nor a *regression* towards animality. Natural selection is far more alien... than either option suggests” (120). The novel portrays how natural selection does not work to create a nice and clean narrative of either progression or regression. Natural selection cannot be talked about with these narrative terms because it does not progress the way a narrative does, and it does not seek to solve anything within any narrative. Humans always tries to find meaning in life, and therefore portraying natural selection as a clean narrative towards something better or something worse feels natural. However, *Galápagos* is not so clear.

An interesting aspect of *Galápagos*, that Davis also points out, is that it is an accurate representation of Darwin’s theory of evolution. Hicks focuses a lot of his analysis on Vonnegut’s use of Darwin’s theory of evolution and exactly how accurate Vonnegut’s portrayal is. He explains that though the narrator Leon is the only sentient being left on the planet, it is not that sentience itself “has become maladaptive,” but rather that sentience has not been important for survival on the island (122). Hicks points out that that the future humanity have not ‘forgotten’ culture, no more that humans today have forgotten how to knuckle-walk (122). Hicks suggests that what Vonnegut is doing is “more radical and destabilising” (122). In other words, the fact that humanity ends up as seal-like creatures with small brains has nothing to do with having decided that culture is not important anymore. Or that sentience has been hurtful to the humans on the island. Instead, sentience is “simply a contingent casualty of the particular conditions of the environment that the generations of humans on Santa Rosalina encounter” (Hicks 122). In the environment on the island, sentience just happened not to be as useful as other traits for optimal survival, and so, by chance, it disappeared. Hicks points out that *Galápagos* is not a narrative about degeneration from the top and in this way, it actually shows its “evolutionary decent from Darwin’s Origins” (122-123). *Galápagos* turns out to be a good representation of Darwin’s theory. It does not show a survival of the fittest, as in strongest, but it commits to showing exactly how random evolution is and how the traits that the islanders are left with in a million years in the future has everything to do with what traits happened to be the most suited to survival. In this sense, what Vonnegut is doing is radical and destabilising, because it shows how it was all up to chance that it was the best fisherfolk who ended up thriving on the island.

A great example Hicks uses is Leon’s observation that the seal-like creatures, he often refers to as fisherfolk, ended up in this form because “in the long run, the survivors [were] not the most ferocious strugglers but the most efficient fisherfolk” (122). What this shows is that the group of people who came to the islands were not “the fittest” as in strongest, and they did

not fight hard for survival. But rather, it just happened that they were good at catching fish for food and it just happened that in the island environment it was the great fishers who survived the best over a million years. And further on Leon explains that “any fisherperson, spending more and more time underwater, could surely catch more fish if he or she were more streamlined, more bulletlike – had a smaller skull” (Hicks 122). The smaller skulls happened to make them better fisherfolk, therefore the ones who over time happened to be born with the mutation of smaller skulls, happened to be better suited for fishing and could therefore thrive better. This, as Hicks explains, is an accurate representation of Darwin’s theory. And while the novel does not hide its use of Darwin’s theory, it seems that few have picked up exactly how accurate of a representation the narrative is.

The narrative space used for the colonists, compared to the future fisherfolk, shows the importance of the present rather than the future. Like Jarvis, Hicks points out that what life is like a million years in the future is mostly only glimpsed at, and what is shown is “barely fit for narrative” (123). In contrast to the narrative space allowed for the present-day humans, the fisherfolk are only referred to indirectly by Leon (Hicks 123). As a result, “their narrative function...is inevitably minimal” (Hicks 123). The glimpses we get of the future cannot be stitched together to an interesting narrative and the future is only interesting because of its relation to the present. Hicks explains the reason for this is because the narrative interest of the future is limited by the focus on “more familiar humanist concerns” in our present time (123). And that “the glimpse of the future in [*Galápagos*] can only dumbly, automatically respond to the present” and that “[w]hatever uniqueness or vitality the posthuman fisherfolk may possess, it cannot be given proper voice in narrative, the hybrid medium that cannot help but betray its own complicity in humanist concerns” (124). The future is only interesting because of how it responds to the present. Despite their unique nature which is intriguing, they have no narrative voice, they exist only as a response to the present.

What *Galápagos* then manages to do is portray a certain temporariness to our own existence. Hicks argues that *Galápagos* exists within “the sphere of one particular, contingent, and almost certainly temporary niche; currently occupied by primates with a particularly large cerebral cortex and fully disposable thumbs, both of which are currently more useful than streamlined skulls and flippers. But only for now” (125). While *Galápagos* imagines a future where our “big brains,” as Vonnegut calls them, are no longer useful, Hicks points out that the novel exists within the context of a world where our current human form is the most optimal one for survival and having an advantage over other species, however, that might only be temporary. The novel simply points out that there might come a time when these traits are not



the niche that will give us an advantage in our environment. Which is part of what is so radical about this novel, that it dares to suggest that what we currently consider the height of our existence might not last forever. And that there might come something after us.

It is the paradoxical nature of that makes it such an interesting narrative. Hicks argues that what makes *Galápagos* “simultaneously maddening and provocative, unattractive and intoxicating... is its paradoxical nature” it attempts to “portray the end of imagination and culture through the medium of imaginative fiction” and “its uniquely cold, scientific tone” that is juxtaposed with a “narrative voice that is, despite everything, humane and humanistic” (125). Hicks points out that while *Galápagos* is not a very satisfying read, it remains an interesting novel because there is so much going on both with the narrative and the novel as an artefact itself. This paradoxical nature underlines the fact that the novel is not trying to fix any problems, but rather hopes to inspire change and inspire independent thinking. It being both pessimistic and optimistic, the reader must figure out of themselves what to think, because the narrative gives no answers.

Ultimately, the narrative points out how life goes on. Towards the end of the narrative, Leon announces that he has “written these words in air – with the tip of the index finger of my left hand, which is also air” (Hicks 125). Which implies that “Leon’s words are no sooner written than erased” (Hicks 125). “Though, non-diegetically, they are nevertheless written with ink, on a page, by Kurt Vonnegut, in his novel [*Galápagos*]; Leon’s final salutation still gestures towards a radical re-contextualisation of writing, of cultural practice” (Hicks 125). With or without human culture as it is cherished today “[l]ife, in its barest and most all-encompassing sense, goes on, but all else human is air on air” (126). The words written by Leon on air with air is a way on showing how things move on, and though we do not like to believe it, eventually it will move beyond everything human. Hicks argues that *Galápagos* “demonstrates, obliquely, a notion that is difficult to conceive of, or to fully accept. Its message is that the cultural instinct may well become, contingently, an evolutionary dead-end” (126). It is not something that anyone gets to decide, but rather by chance, sometime in the future, human culture as we know it may not be the niche needed to survive. And if it turns out not to be optimal for survival anymore, something else will take over. It is hard to imagine a world where humanity is not what it is today, but just like knuckle walking no longer served a purpose for survival for humanity’s ancestors, culture might end up being the same evolutionary dead-end. Ultimately, a million years might change a lot of things and it may or may not change humanity’s place within the ecosystem or the traits the ensure our survival.

While it might be easy to conclude that Vonnegut is suggesting that what is standing in the way of our happiness is our sentience, this not the case. What Hicks concludes is that Vonnegut gestures “towards the limits (in practical, semiotic, epistemological, or temporal terms) of our cultural intelligence, and the minimalist textual presence of the future fisherfolk mirrors this inexpressible finitude” (126). From a human-centric perspective, it is hard to imagine that there might be limits to our current ways of thinking and being. However, the little space used to describe and narrativize the future, tries to hint at some unspeakable limits to our current way of being. What might happen to us over a million years of evolution is unknown and the seal-like creatures is only one possible outcome. When the limit will be reached is unknown, but the future fisherfolk demonstrate that what might be considered useful now will eventually change.

To conclude, Hicks explores *Galápagos* from a new, non-human, perspective. Looking at how the novel dares to suggest a time after our current human culture, and that our current treasured traits might not be optimal for survival in the future. However, this has nothing to do with deciding to remove any traits. But if we as a species are not thriving in our environment anymore, those who have other traits who do better will be the ones to survive. The final message Hicks seem to get from the novel is that while the novel to some extent explores what humanity might look like if our current traits are no longer fit for survival, the important part is that currently those traits are still fit for survival.

#### **1.4 Building on a Planetary Citizenship**

While Davis looks at *Galápagos* from a humanist perspective, Jarvis and Hicks comes more from an environmental perspective. At times they hit on some of the same ideas but concluding differently about them. It is interesting to see what observations they make about *Galápagos*, and in this subsection, I will compare some of their findings with each other and look at what ideas and themes can be used to look at how the novel is thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship.

As mentioned, Vonnegut has explained that when he’s writing about another planet, he is ultimately making it unbelievable so that our own planet becomes more important. This thinking also applies to *Galápagos*, but in a slightly different sense. While Vonnegut is not writing about another planet, he is writing about a possible future. However, in making this future unrealistic in achieving any time soon, it underlines that what is important is the present. While all critics seem to agree that in the end the novel is really about humanity in present time, Davis seems to be very concerned about the loss of what makes us human in the future and the divided opinion of whether such a future is worth it if it means a loss of our

current human traits. Jarvis and Hicks on the other hand, does not spend much time discussing the reduced brain size and loss of other traits, because they make it clear that the limited narrative space allowed for narrativizing future life demonstrates that it the present that is the focus of the narrative. This also underlines how the narrative is thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship, because it focuses on the here and now and is ultimately interested in what the current human species should change.

Jarvis talks about the human species as if we have lost something, that nature has got rid of the destructive aspects of the human species. However, according to Hicks, it just happens that these traits were not the ones needed to thrive in this island habitat and therefore the people who got other traits became better fisherfolk. It was random that the previous characteristics were not useful for survival in the habitat where they ended up. There is a possibility that if the characters had ended up on a different island, maybe the brains would have remained big or maybe the better bird catchers would survive. I think Hicks' perspective certainly is a humbling one. Remembering that the current form of human species is not the optimal or even final form. Also being reminded that there were different humans before us and there will probably be different humans after us. I think this is an important perspective to bring into planetary citizenship. Though it might not be a big part of it, I think it is an important idea to keep in the background because it puts existence into some perspective. But putting too much focus on it might make it feel rather useless to be talking about a planetary citizenship at all if life will go on anyways. Instead, it is a humbling thought that might be a reminder that nature is bigger than the human species and that we are a part of its ecosystem, not the other way around.

Because the Darwin's theory is such big part of the story all critics comments on it, but they have slightly different observations and opinions on the matter. Davis observes that with the use of the theory, *Galápagos*' narrative becomes more believable and without it the narrative would not have the same weight. In addition to commenting on how in evolving away the negative characteristics there is hope for change within the novel. As mentioned, Jarvis mentions Darwin's theory in context of the traits that have been lost in evolution. While Hicks explores exactly how alien natural selection is, and how it does not fit into a neat human narrative. Hicks is the only one who explores the topic outside of just being the tool that makes some human traits disappear. In showing exactly how accurate the evolutionary theory in the narrative is, he builds Davis' argument about how the theory makes the novel authentic and believable. In addition to adding depth and mysticism to the natural selection process that is beyond a neat human narrative evolving towards something specific.

What Hicks' posthumanist perspective does is distance the reader from the events in the narrative, while Davis and Jarvis' focus on the human aspect and make it clearer that the narrative is hopeful despite building up a case against humanity. Hicks talks about how Vonnegut imagines limits to humanity and how nature will eventually move on without our culture if it happens that it is no longer useful in the environment humanity is in. However, both Davis and Jarvis see more a hope in changing things in present time and does not spend time contemplating an Earth without humans. While Davis at times focuses too much on the meaning of the evolved humanity in the future and whether or not their happiness is worth losing their intelligence, he does eventually conclude that the narrator's rejection of his father symbolizes a hope for the present. Similarly, Jarvis concludes that Vonnegut hopes that humanity might heed to nature's warning and change for the better. However, Hicks' perspective distances the reader from the human species altogether, pointing out that while our culture is useful now, there might come a time where it is not. Not that this is a negative thing, but in terms of a planetary citizenship it might make it feel useless to try to fix anything if life will just eventually move on. While Jarvis notes that it is humanity that needs to reconsider our planetary role, Hicks argues instead that Vonnegut proposes all the limits that humanity and our culture actually have in the context of our planet.

Davis discusses how humanity devolves into the seal-like creatures, but Hicks' observation makes this a wrong description. Hicks dives into the evolutionary accuracy of the novel, but a devolution is not possible. A devolution or a reverse evolution, would mean evolving back into monkeys. A re-evolution would suggest that evolution would somehow go back to the very beginning and start the evolutionary process over again. However, what happens instead is just evolution, a continuous evolution, because life can only move forwards. Vonnegut confirms this in an interview where he says "I consider it evolution. It's simply change" (Allen and Smith 291) when the interviewer starts asking a question about devolution. However, it is understandable that one might conclude that our precious brains shrinking would be a step back in evolution. And as Hicks points out, it is hard to imagine a time when our culture is no longer here and what we value now is no longer useful. Because what happens instead of a devolution is that the big brains just happened not to be needed in the island habitat and the people who had smaller brains happened to be better at catching the food. In other words, when the traits were no longer useful they were replaced with ones that were useful. There are many critics who use the words devolution or re-evolution, and in a metaphorical context it might make sense. But discussing Vonnegut's scientific accuracy makes devolution the wrong word to use.

Both Davis and Hicks find an interest in *Galápagos*' lack of clear answer or message. Davis picks up on what he calls an ambivalence in Vonnegut, where it is not decided if the harmless existence in the future is worth the price of our most prized human traits. Hicks makes a similar observation, but instead focuses on the paradoxical nature of the narrative. Because as the narrator is making a case against human culture because of all the damage it has caused, the narrative is portraying this through a physical book, a cultural object. The narrative argues for everything good has come out of the future seal-like creatures, but he does not fully portray what they are like. In the context of a planetary citizenship this ambivalence and paradoxical nature of the novel is important, because it does not give the reader specific answers. It does not tell the reader that everything would be better if only humanity turned into seals. Also, in saying that the seal life would be preferred, but being unable to properly narrativize this existence, it is an aspect of the novel that starts conversations and prompts readers to start thinking about these issues for themselves.

While the animals state in the future could be seen as a utopian existence, Hicks wants to make it clear that “the novel does not depict a return to Eden or indeed a procession towards utopia” (119). He clarifies that “a utopia is a form of *society*, and that is not what is being presented in [*Galápagos*]” (120). What is being shown in *Galápagos*, according to Hicks is a future where these aspects of human culture showed itself not to be as useful for survival as other traits, and therefore by accident there was never a society established on the island. And because utopia being a form of society, *Galápagos*' seal-like creatures cannot be describes as living in a utopia. Hicks also argues, as mentioned earlier that “[*Galápagos*] is more provocative when its posthuman future is read as neither a *progression* towards utopia nor a *regression* towards animality” (Hicks 120). The narrative is neither suggesting a type of progression or regression of the human state. But, leading into the next chapter, what is presented as a progression towards a utopia is the Odonian society on the planet Anarres in *Dispossessed*.

## Chapter Two: on Le Guin

### 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will explore different ideas and themes already picked up in *Dispossessed* that I think are relevant when eventually looking at the narrative in terms of thinking about a planetary citizenship. In putting the different critics under categories of the ideas they explore will help organize the themes they have been exploring within the work. To start off I will be looking at the world building in Le Guin, to get better understanding of how she sets up the societies on her planets. Then I will go on to look the specific environmental ideas that critics have picked up in her work. First environmental themes in a political context, then in a more utopian context, and then from a more altogether environmental perspective.

### 2.1 World Construction and World Reduction

Ursula K. Le Guin is an interesting author to be looking at because, unlike Vonnegut, she was a celebrated author while she was alive and won prizes for her work, both science fiction and other. In this subsection I will be laying out some of the critical work that has been done on Le Guin's world construction and establish a theory called "world reduction" in her work. This will be the groundwork for later discussing her storyworld more in depth.

An important aspect of the environmental thinking in *Dispossessed* relates to the storyworld that Le Guin has created, while the planet Urras is very much like our own, Anarres stands out as a foreign environment to the reader. Anarres' environment is barren and dry with limited growth of wild plants and next to no animals on land. A similar planet from Le Guin's earlier novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), is called Winter, and Fredric Jameson, in "World Reduction in Le Guin" in *Archaeologies of the Future: the Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, argues that this planet more than just a "rude environment, inhospitable to human life" (269). As the name of the planet suggests, this is a place where it is always cold, and this environment offer challenges for the survival on the planet. However, Jameson thinks that the environment is much more than just cold, he suggests that this environment is actually a symbolic confirmation of the freedom of the organism, and it shows how the body can be almost totally disengaged from its environment. He sees Winter as an experimental landscape where humanity's existence is extremely simplified, and where our "sensory links with the multiple and shifting perceptual fields around us are abstracted so radically" as to give a new idea as to "the ultimate nature of human reality" (269). What Jameson sees Le Guin doing in her creation of Winter is more

than just make humanity survive in a cold climate. The environment symbolises a freedom from the environment and gives a new idea of human nature.

This technique of creating an experimental landscape where existence is significantly reduced as a result is what Jameson calls “world reduction”. He explains world reduction as a technique is based “on a principle of systematic exclusion, a kind of surgical excision of empirical reality, something like a process of ontological attenuation in which the sheer teeming multiplicity of what exists, of what we call reality, is deliberately thinned and weeded out through an operation of radical abstraction and simplification” (271). World reduction, then, as Le Guin has used this technique, means constructing a world, like Winter or Anarres, by an extreme reduction of the familiar biodiverse nature of our own planet so that only a few features remain. This world reduction technique, as Jameson argued about Winter, has more consequences than simply just living in a cold climate.

On *Dispossessed*'s Anarres Le Guin's world reduction goes beyond just the physical lack of a diverse and complex natural environment. The effects of world reduction have inescapable effects beyond this (Jameson 271). On Anarres, the world reduction means that the planet is mostly barren and dry, but it also means that it is a planet where “human life is virtually without biological partner” which has led Takver, the protagonist's partner, to express feelings of being “unnaturally isolated” from nature and she misses a feeling of being “a *part*” of a larger complex ecosystem (Jameson 271). However, Jameson views the omission of animals as the “negative obverse of a far more positive omission,” which is the omission of the Darwinian life cycle, which means that on Anarres there is a lack of both predators and victims on land (271). What this omission means for Anarres' inhabitants is that they have been left alone to be in charge of and invent their own destiny (Jameson 272). However, what I do not see Jameson consider is how Le Guin has not completely left out the Darwinian life cycle on Anarres. In the oceans there are fish and smaller life forms that are predators and victims to each other (Le Guin 763). And it is from watching these fish that Takver gets her ideas about how unnaturally isolated the Anarresti are. While the diverse ocean life might not affect them directly, it must in some way affect how their think about life, like we see Takver doing.

The world reduction technique also implies how utopia and scarcity cannot be separated. Jameson argues that the “device of world reduction becomes transformed into a socio-political hypothesis about the inseparability of utopia and scarcity” (277). Meaning that Anarres' scarce and barren natural environment is not just that, but the world reduction technique forwards a “socio-political hypothesis” of how utopia and scarcity cannot be

separated. And that the “Odonian colonization of barren Anarres offers thus the most thoroughgoing literary application of the technique” and how it also “constitutes a powerful and timely rebuke to present-day attempts to parlay American abundance and consumer goods into some ultimate vision of the “great society.”” (277-278). In other words, Anarres might be proof of how if one were to achieve a utopia it might be necessary for life within the utopia to be built upon scarcity. An abundance of consumer goods might not be necessary for achieving a perfect society.

When thinking about *Dispossessed* and the natural ecology on Anarres, Jameson’s term world reduction is helpful in explaining this technique Le Guin uses to create her storyworld. Gib Prettyman in “Daoism, Ecology, and World Reduction in Le Guin’s Utopian Fictions” from *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction (2014)*, reflects upon “the implications of the world reductions that Jameson sees in her work” (58). Prettyman explains that that while Jameson do address “Le Guin’s ecological ideals... he similarly treats them primarily as symptomatic evidence of more familiar political issues” (60). While pointing out some of the ecological aspects of Le Guin’s work, Jameson is quick to use them as evidence of how the work deals with political issues, instead of treating the ecological issues as ecological issues in themselves. Prettyman observes that Jameson’s world reduction “suggests both regrettably escapist and laudably utopian impulses” (61). And while he refers to the world reduction in Le Guin as an “experimental ecology,” it seems that Jameson does not explore the significance of world reduction in ecological terms (61). From an ecocritical perspective, it makes sense that Prettyman makes these criticisms, because from his point of view, Jameson is not exploring the ecological issues in enough depth. Which is why Prettyman finds Jameson’s approach to Le Guin’s work lacking. A significant shortcoming, in Prettyman’s opinion, is the unwillingness “to consider Le Guin’s frameworks,” especially considering that “ecological crises are an important historical context in their own right” (62). Because the ecocritical perspective is a new perspective, it makes sense that Prettyman finds Jameson’s approach lacking, as this has not been the main focus of critics until recently.

## **2.2 Citizenship in Utopia**

In this subsection I will be looking at how it is to be a citizen in Anarres’ utopia. Because while the inhabitants are living in a utopia, and they themselves call their society a utopia, the reader notices their scarce living conditions. These conditions might contrast with the reader’s previous assumptions as to what a utopia is supposed to look like. In focusing on what their reality is like I hope to gain insight into how such a sustainable society works with



the barren and dry ecology and what effects these conditions are having on the inhabitants quality of life.

Anarres' society and the structure of how it is set up and works is an interesting aspect of *Dispossessed*. It is an anarchist society, which means they reject the centralization of government and the power structure a government often brings with it. However, to run a society there needs to be some form of organisation of work and resources and some kind of guidelines for behaviour. Especially on a planet where resources are limited. Utopian researcher Werner Christie Mathisen, in "The Underestimation of Politics in Green Utopias: The Description of Politics in Huxley's *Island*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*, and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*," highlights the importance of politics in what he calls green utopias and underlines his view of how politics have been underestimated in the discussions of green utopias (56). The category of green utopia, from his point of view, seems to refer to a utopian texts that express "the fundamental ideas of modern ecopolitical thought," ideas such as anti-consumerism, decentralisation, self-reliance, in addition to expressing an alternative to both capitalist and communist industrialism" (57). The most interesting aspect *Dispossessed*'s utopia Anarres, to Mathisen, is its ambiguousness, placing a utopia within an environment of great scarcity and the political solutions to such scarcity and the consequences of it (57). *Dispossessed*, in other words, follows through on its subtitle "An Ambiguous Utopia". In other discussions of green utopia, there seems to have been an underestimation of the politics, assuming that in a perfect utopia there would be no need for politics or that the political aspect of the society could not possibly have any issues.

As an anarchist society they got to start civilization from scratch when the Odonians moved from Urras to Anarres where there were no society beforehand. Building their perfect society, something that must have been an important aspect to them was to create a functioning anarchist society where one could avoid a powerful government and a collection of power in few hands. How does a society avoid or get a low degree of institutionalisation of politics that might lead to people seeking power? In both *Ecotopia* and *Dispossessed*, Mathisen argues that it is the "informality and emotionality of political discussions" in the utopia *Ecotopia* in *Ecotopia* and Anarres "are indicators of – and contribute to – a low degree of ... institutionalisation of political activity in these utopian societies" (61). While there is no way of avoiding politics all together, how it is structured is key. In terms of Anarres specifically this means that it is this structure of the political debates and how the people who are debating are emotionally involved in the subject matters that results in this "low degree of... institutionalisation of political activity." It is interesting to note here how there is a "low

degree” instead of a “none-existence” of institutionalisation of the political activity. Where there are politics there needs to be some kind of regulation and control to a certain degree. Throughout *Dispossessed* there are short references to power and political activity that is starting to look more institutionalised than might have been originally intended. Even in a utopia, the political landscape needs some form of institution to regulate it. However, what Anarres has managed to do through making sure that their politics are informal, and people are emotionally invested is to keep this institutionalization to a low degree.

Through the protagonist Shevek’s attempts at sharing his work, we see how these debates work. On Anarres the closest thing to a political institution is the “Production and Distribution Coordination” (PDC), who has no legal authority (Mathisen 59) and only consists of volunteers who only serve for four years with voting rights (Mathisen 60). The debates taking place are not regulated (Mathisen 60) and it is not unusual that several people speak at the same time with an emotional and personal tone (Mathisen 61). It is this informality that keeps the debates from becoming an arena for institutionalised political activity, or at least keeps it to a low degree. Those who are involved in the debates are there because they have an interest in being there and they care about the outcome of the cause. Not because of money or power, but personal interest in what is going on in their society. Though some who are involved work for the PDC, others show up because they want to discuss a specific issue, which explains why the tone is emotional and personal. However, in a society where there are no politicians who pass any laws or decides punishment for breaking these laws. An important question is how such a society manage to live sustainably without a government implementing law of accepted behaviour and consequences for not following these laws.

Though there are no formal ways the Anarresti are being encouraged to act according to some guidelines. On Anarres there have informal ways of creating the necessary behaviour to adapt to their planet’s ecological limits, which contrasts with the more familiar system of environmental policies in A-Io on Urras where we see how they have implemented regulations and taxation on environmentally draining behaviour (Mathisen 63). Especially readers today will recognise the laws and regulations they have on cars and fossil fuels. These laws are there because, as Shevek’s guide in A-Io remarks, “if freely allowed to the public would tend to drain irreplaceable natural resources or to foul the environment” (Le Guin 681). At the time they might have been laws Le Guin and the environmental movement wished to one day be implemented. Today the restriction on cars and fossil fuels are already starting and are looking more and more likely.

The Anarresti system of avoiding draining natural resources and fouling the environment, however, is a more interesting case. The inhabitants on Anarres are being systematically pushed in the direction of correct behaviour in other ways than by laws and warnings of punishment if they do not comply. What keeps citizens in line is a strong social conscience that works as a hindrance to wasteful behaviour, meaning that the main reason Anarresti act sustainably might not be because they know it is bad for the environment, but they think it is distasteful which is “in accordance with the organic and post-materialistic ideology that permeates this society” (Mathisen 63). Knowing the consequences of wasteful behaviour is not necessarily the main thing that keeps the planets level of production and consumption at a sustainable level. The strong social conscience is heavily influenced by what Mathisen calls their “post-materialistic ideology.” This ideology is based on their founder philosopher Leia Odo who wrote, among other things, that “Excess is excrement” and that “excess retained in the body is a poison” (Le Guin 694). While Odo never lived to see the society they created on Anarres, her ideas continue to influence life and thinking on the planet seven generations later. Anarresti today are being taught her philosophies from the children in school, and her ideas are ingrained in their way of thinking. Her ideas about excess have translated to an understanding that any excess, either in materials or attention, is frowned upon. Anything beyond what is necessary for survival is excess, with few exceptions, is poison. In A-Io when Shevek sees a shopping district for the first time, the origins of his thoughts are clear as he thinks “acres of luxuries, acres of excrement” (Le Guin 720). This ideology of excess or “post-materialistic ideology” is what inhabitants are taught and is ingrained in every part of society, and not acting in line with the ideals of the social conscience will have consequences.

In a way the Anarresti society shows that one does not need the laws and regulations of A-Io to get people to live a more sustainable life. However, there is a draw back to the strong social conscience on Anarres. Part of Anarres’ ambiguity is that Le Guin shows how things are not that black and white and informal social control is necessarily better than other forms of regulating behaviour. She shows an awareness of the dangers this type of informal social control and the strong social conscience (Mathisen 63). The protagonist Shevek is a good example of how the narrative explores the consequences of this type of control. He is a very competent and independent scientist who has been struggling both to publish his work and get credit for it, however it is not the scientific community he is complaining about when he says, “We’ve made laws, laws of conventional behaviour, build wall all around ourselves, and we can’t see them, because they’re part of our thinking” (Mathisen 63-64). The society

who was founded upon revolution, who supposed to continue to be a permanent revolution, is now a rigid and intolerant place (Mathisen 64). The informal control has led to a collective agreement of how it is acceptable to act and be, but if you happen not to fit into this box then the society as a whole rejects you. Shevek is doing physics more advanced than anyone else on their planet, and because no one else there understands it, it is seen as not essential and therefore loses his position at the institute. Shevek also sees his childhood friend Tirin suffer because his plays are misinterpreted by the public and he is sent to an asylum. This is what he means when he says, “We’ve made laws,” though they are not actual laws like the ones on Urras, they have informal laws where the social conscience punishes you if you break them.

Though changing behaviour or regulating behaviour based on the social conscience might seem unfamiliar at first, there are instances where laws have been passed based not on political initiation but rather on a desire of change from the people. It seems that much of the desire to make societies greener and more environmentally friendly and sustainable have “not been channelled primarily into government offices through political parties, but has been expressed by individual and groups trying to live different, by consuming less and being in closer contact with and doing less harm to nature” (Mathisen 66). Though these changes have led to laws their initial start was based on groups of people wanting changes. What has happened here seems to be a mix of A-Io and Anarres’ system. What Anarres’ informal social control has led to is not official laws, but Shevek still experience them as such, because one seems to be punished for not following these “law of conventional behaviour.”

One might wonder then if informal social control is a better way of regulating behaviour in a society. Mathisen warns against steering away from strong political institutions and to go for a strong and unanimously accepted ecocentric mentality within a society (69). Though some might think this a better way to govern a society, however, the danger of this alternative is that there is a tendency for political and cultural conformism (Mathisen 69). This is what Shevek is referring to when, as quoted earlier, he says they have made “laws of conventional behaviour.” What then happens when one does not follow these expectations of behaviour is that one tries to conform to the socially accepted forms of behaviour, either in the types of music or art one creates or try to conform to the politics in the society even though one might not agree with in. And the consequences of not following conventional behaviour is getting rejected by society. Though Anarres is supposed to be a free anarchist utopia, throughout the novel Shevek discovers how the society is moving towards political and cultural conformity. Though the utopia seems to be working in terms of keeping the society sustainable, Mathisen argues that “utopias should emphasise change and renewal as essential

characteristics of a good society” and that “[g]iving politics a more prominent place in the utopian society is probably a reliable way of achieving this” (69). A utopia, in other words, should keep emphasising continuous change and never stands still, which seems to be the direction Anarres is heading towards. Which is what Shevek realises as he keeps meeting people and systems that are not willing to change but would rather just keep things the way they have always been. With the help of his slightly more revolutionary friend Bedap, they work to keep the revolution alive and keep challenging the current way of doing things. Though the informal social control seems to work well in terms of making people act sustainably, there are definitely a draw back with relying heavily on this. Mathisen thinks that instead, one should aim at a utopia where politics has a prominent place to make sure that the society keeps emphasising continuous change and renewal.

*Dispossessed's* Anarres, then, becomes a convincing warning against the tendency green theorists and politicians have for celebrating rural or small-town communities for reducing to a minimum the use and influence of formal political or legal authority (Mathisen 71). Because as we see in Anarres, a minimal use of formal political or legal authority leads to conformism, where one gets punished in informal ways for being different or not agreeing with the norms the social conscience rules by. Mathisen therefore emphasises the important role politics have in utopias, and he thinks that it is only through politics a utopian society will remain ever changing, which is how he characterises a good green utopia. However, the citizens might be living a sustainable life, but the price they pay for this life is high. What Mathisen does not consider in his analysis of the Anarresti utopia is the consequences of the environment. Because it is not only a danger of political and cultural conformism that they struggle against, but also, as I will be discussing in the next subsection, they also have to face the consequences of living in such an unforgivable natural environment.

### **2.3 Citizenship in Scarcity**

In this subsection I will be looking at not only citizens in a utopia, but citizens in a utopia that is placed on a planet that has a very scarce natural ecology. I will be exploring the consequences this scarcity has on the citizens. Because such a barren landscape is not what one initially imagines a utopia to look like. Such a context for a perfect society must in some ways affect the inhabitants life, maybe even affect their own perception of their utopian society.

In “Utopian Studies, Environmental Literature, and the Legacy of an Idea: Educating Desire in Miguel Abensour and Ursula K. Le Guin” Christine Nadir explains utopian studies’ much used term “education of desire” and uses this to analyse the ambiguity of the utopia in

Le Guin's *Dispossessed*. She argues that literary utopian studies have not considered that the education of desire intertwines desire and domination, in other words, that they are not as separate as utopian studies have argued before (24). Earlier readings of *Dispossessed* have not, in Nadir's opinion, taken the ecological aspect of the utopian society on Anarres seriously, and have therefore not considered the effects Anarres' habitat has on the "education of desire" that utopian studies see in the novel (33). To understand her argument about the education of desire in *Dispossessed*, it is important to understand her use of the term and how her view differs from previous utopian studies' analyses.

To educate desire means teaching how "utopian longing can itself lead to new forms of domination as desire is arranged and rearranged, again and again, by power and discourse. In his works this dynamic is called the dialectic of emancipation" (Nadir 25-26). The French political philosopher Miguel Abensour's term "education of desire" was translated by E.P. Thomson who brought it to the attention of Anglo-American utopian studies. Thomson argues that Abensour's argument is that the utopian literature no longer "outlined systematic blueprints" for the perfect society, instead they moved towards what he called a "new utopian spirit" and the "education of desire" (Nadir 26).

The term "education of desire" in a utopia, then, means that the role of utopia is not to give clear ideas about the right thing to desire, but its role is rather to educate desire, meaning, stimulate and awaken the idea of desiring itself (Nadir 29). And that "[d]esire must be taught to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all *to desire otherwise*" (29). However, E.P. Thomson's translation that brought Abensour's ideas to the attention of Anglo-American utopian studies translated "to desire otherwise" instead with "to desire in a different way" and Nadir points out that the original nuance in Thomson's translation is lost. Max Blechman's translation "to desire otherwise," in Nadir's opinion, captures more completely the many possibilities of utopian education of desire (30). Blechman's translation opens up the infinite possible ways one might desire, not locking it down to a single different way or already set different ways. To desire otherwise is open to all forms one might wish to desire.

Though critics have argued that *Dispossessed* is a work that educated desire, stimulating thoughts of a better life, Nadir argues that the Anarresti utopia "shows how this very impulse can be exploited in order to obscure the erosion of freedom" (26). While the Anarresti utopia is a place where one is free to desire whatever one wants, it also complicates the idea of blueprints and the education of desire. Though Anarres is at first perceived as a utopia free from a government, hierarchies, and capitalism, this existence is complicated by its barren and dry environment that makes survival a challenge. *Dispossessed* explores how the

discourse, knowledge, and power that could lead to a sustainable and equitable society can also restrict both freedom of thought and freedom of desire (Nadir 34). The society's utopian characteristics are complicated by the reality of the harsh environmental ecology of the planet they live on. The consequences of placing a utopia within such an environmental context is what Nadir argues other critics have often not taken into account when analysing Anarres as a utopia. As talked about earlier, Mathisen's discussion of the politics on Anarres does not take into account the environmental context that the utopia exists within. It only explores it as a green utopia, but their environment must have an impact on the citizens in this utopia.

To ensure survival of its inhabitants the society has two mechanisms for social control. The first is the institution the Production and Distribution Coordination (the PDC), who manage and distribute resources and organizes and distribute manual labour, among other administrative like tasks. The PDC works like an administration, they have no formal or legal power, and they cannot force anyone to do work they do not want to do, all they can do is tell people where they stand in public opinion. The other is "an all-pervasive ideology of sacrifice," which is based on writings from the philosopher Laia Odo (Nadir 32-33), who is the founder of the Odonians who were the ones who settled on Anarres and now make up the Anarresti society. Odo's ideology teaches that "excess is excrement" and "excrement retained in the body is poison" (Le Guin 720). The inhabitants have taken this to mean that every form of excess, both material and other, is bad and should be rejected. It is this social structure that makes freedom both possible and impossible (Nadir 33). As the PDC does not have any legal power, people can therefore in theory do anything they want to do, it is only this "all-pervasive ideology of sacrifice" that impacts their wants and actions. This is what Mathisen called "post-materialistic ideology," and what using terms from the novel one might call their ideology of excess. However, what Mathisen did not take into consideration was the limits this ideology and their environment puts on their "free" choices. Though they are free from materialistic nature of capitalism and a government, and in theory free to do whatever they want, their thoughts, habits, and actions are always being restricted by the planet's scarceness and their society's need for survival (Nadir 33). Not is the strong social conscience regulating their behaviour, but the limit of their planet's resources is also restricting what choices they actually can realistically make.

Anarres' utopia explores how a society does not have to choose between blueprint and freedom to desire. In *Dispossessed's* utopia there is a "mediated coexistence of political blueprint and the freedom of desire" (Nadir 33). Meaning that both political blueprint and the freedom of desire exist at the same time, because their environment does not allow for

complete freedom of desire. *Dispossessed*, then, challenges literary utopian studies' clear distinction between systematic blueprints from education of desire. It does this because the ecology of Anarres makes certain sacrifices necessary which means that the Anarresti are not so free to desire freely as earlier claimed. It also complicates Abensour's claim that in every good society desire unsettles its laws to prevent the intention of emancipation of turning into domination (Nadir 33). Nadir explains that *Dispossessed*'s Anarres, despite intentions of liberation from Urras, cannot help but to cooperate with the power structure it seeks liberation from and "complicitous critique informs the utopian planet even at its earliest historical origins (34). The International Society of Odonians, the future inhabitants of Anarres, were rebelling against the authority on Urras and Urras reacted by giving them the planet Anarres to live on. Despite rejecting money and profit on their planet, the Odonians describe the course of events as bribery and selling out. The rebels were bought off. And to continue to be able to survive on Anarres, they have to keep up trade relations with Urras (Nadir 35). Urras gets metals while Anarres gets fuels, fauna, and some manufactured goods (Nadir 35), which is essential for their continued survival on the planet. Their survival on Anarres depends on their continued trade with Urras, the "enemy".

A condition for life on Anarres to continue to work is that the inhabitants continue to put the needs of the society above their own needs. They are "conditioned to sacrifice [their] individual desires for the community in exchange for a modest, if sometimes painful, existence" (Nadir 36). Their "utopian ideal of unlimited freedom comes into conflict with the sacrifices demanded by Anarres's "blueprint for survival"" (Nadir 37). While their utopian ideals tell them that on Anarres they are free and have the freedom to do whatever they want, which in theory they are, Anarres' society have a built-in blueprint that ensures their survival, a blueprint they are taught to follow. The blueprint is ensuring that their society is living sustainably, which they have no choice but to do because their environment is unforgiving. This leads to important questions central to environmental thinking and utopian studies (Nadir 37). Two of the most central are "How does one imagine a utopia based on desire and freedom and devoid of political outline when ecological scarcity demands a needs-based organisation of resources to ensure survival?" And "How does a green, sustainable society educate desire when... "a dramatic reduction in material wants" must be "prescribed"" (Nadir 37)? These questions can be answered when considering Leia Odo, the ideological founder philosopher (Nadir 37). Despite spending all her life on the naturally abundant Urras, Odo still argues that a life of sacrifice and simplicity would be the most rewarding human life (Nadir 38). The inhabitants of Anarres are taught to sacrifice the desire for material



abundance and the desire for any symbolic forms of capital (Nadir 38). They give up any form of symbolic power that attracts attention, like being smarter than the other people in the room because if they do not understand what you are talking about you are “egoizing” (Nadir 39). Their existence is based on sacrifice, not only because of the scarcity of Anarres, but also because Odo thought this would be the most rewarding way to live your life.

In every facets of life on Anarres there is a deeply rooted functionalism and organicism, which “blurs ecological scarcity with other socially constructed scarcities” as a result, every action that does not follow this ideology breaks an unwritten law (Nadir 39). Anarres, then, is organised through a blueprint, one that is enacted through “moral discourses that makes certain ways of being seem natural... restricting what can be said and known about the world” (Nadir 39). Similar to Mathisen’s observations of how Anarres is ruled by informal social control and a strong social conscience. However, it is only through this “all-pervasive functionalism” that one can achieve a utopia on Anarres (Nadir 42). Any other way would not be able to adapt their behaviour so completely to the limits of the scarcity of the environment. What makes life possible on Anarres is the Odonian discourse of scarcity because it helps the inhabitants to “accept absolute dispossession and sacrifice as the condition of their freedom, as the condition of utopia” (Nadir 42). This ideology, then, is what makes the inhabitants not desire a different existence, because they have accepted dispossession and sacrifice as a necessity for their freedom. However, this paradoxically results in not being completely free by our own standard. They view their society as a free utopia, however, a person from Urras might not have the same perception.

The environmental ecology of Anarres has consequences for the citizens beyond just lacking material objects and being at risk for famine. As Nadir explains, it also complicates their experience of freedom and their freedom to desire. However, the ecology of Anarres also has more effects on the citizens themselves. As Ursula K. Heise explores, the environment also affects their feeling of belonging in the ecosystem on Anarres and makes for a lonely existence.

In “Reduced Ecologies: Science fiction and the Meaning of Biological Scarcity” Ursula K. Heise discusses the effects of reduced ecologies in Le Guin’s *Dispossessed*, Orson Scott Card’s *Ender* cycle, and Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Mars* trilogy. Sf has become one of the main genres to discuss issues related to climate change (99). Within sf one can highlight current problems of how humans exploit nature by exploring different environmental futures (Heise 99). The alien environments’ function, in Heise’s opinion, has not been studied with the same depth as alien technology or alien transformation of the human body (99). When

creating alien environments, few sf novels try to create a diverse and complex environmental biodiversity. This strategy of reducing the environmental diversity, Heise argues, fulfils three functions. It foregrounds ‘world reduction,’ it offers a metaphor for the type of environment that may be left if humanity keeps disrupting natural ecosystems, and it offers a scenario where humans are forced to ask anew how to interact with the nonhuman others (Heise 99-100).

The scarcity on Anarres has affects the citizens in more ways than lacking resources and at times food. The environment on Anarres shows an instance of Jameson’s term “world reduction,” which I explained in a previous subsection. To sum up, world reduction refers to a technique where an environment has been radically reduced and most things have been excluded, simplifying the existence within such an environment. Reducing the diversity in the environment, then, foregrounds this technique.

Heise explains that in Jameson’s reading of Anarres, the biological and ecological scarcity works as symbols for an economic scarcity that Le Guin presents as the utopian alternative to consumer capitalism (101). However, Heise then argues that this reading is unconvincing because it takes Le Guin’s carefully thought-out planetary ecosystems and gives it simply a metaphorical function. In addition, she argues that it ignores how Le Guin critiques her ambiguous utopia through her protagonist who is constantly fighting against invisible authorities, rules and laws, which the society on Anarres would never admit the existence of (101). Heise considers Jameson’s reading of Anarres to be lacking a proper consideration of the ecological aspect of the novel and criticises him for concluding that Anarres’ ecological scarcity is merely a symbol for an economic scarcity. However, considering that Jameson is a Marxist thinker, it is odd that he left out an in-depth consideration of the ecological scarcity and its more literal effect or meaning. On the other hand, Heise praises Nadir’s reading, discussed earlier, of how Le Guin questions any social order that justifies the naturalised existing power structure in terms of the availability of material resources. And that it is the discourse of scarcity that makes it possible to live on Anarres, because it conditions the inhabitants to accept that their utopia is only possible if they accept absolute dispossession and sacrifice as condition for their freedom (Heise 101).

For the citizens of Anarres, the lack of biodiversity leaves them feeling lonely. The lack of other species on Anarres goes beyond just problems related to the scarcity of resources, the lack of other species also leaves a feeling of not being a part of a larger ecosystem (Heise 102). While there is a rich biodiversity in the three oceans on Anarres, there are only a few other species in addition to humans on land. It is the protagonist’s partner,

Takver, who puts into words what this feeling is. Because she is a fish geneticist, she understands the diverse life that exists in Anarres' three oceans. Taker explains that compared with the oceans there is a lack of complexity within the ecosystem on land, she explains how she thinks the inhabitants of Anarres are unnaturally isolated and if they lived on the ecologically abundant Urras, they would feel much more a *part* (Heise 102). Heise argues that Takver's argument about how coexisting with other species in a planetary ecology would make you feel a part is "both intuitively plausible and strange" (102). The Anarresti are originally from Urras and have not co-evolved with anything on Anarres, which makes them in a way an invasive species on the planet (Heise 102). Taker's thoughts and reflections about how living together with other species would mean more than just the availability of more resources are confirmed by Shevek when he goes to Urras (Heise 102).

When he arrives on Urras, in the state A-Io, Shevek is moved by many aspects of their abundant ecology, for example horses, birds, and forests. However, the ideology of excess from Odo's philosophy, or "all-pervasive functionalism" as Nadir would call it or "post-materialistic ideology" as Mathisen would call it, he brings with him from Anarres makes him for question the amount of resources this all takes, but this weariness is moved aside by an overwhelming sense of connection to the nature (102). In such scenes, Heise argues, Anarres' limited biodiversity becomes a constraint beyond mere resource scarcity, it also constraints what humans could become (103). However, an abundance of species does not guarantee such feelings of being a part. Despite a thriving biodiversity, Urrasti show little ability to look at nature as anything more than material resources (Heise 103). There is, in Heise's opinion, a lack of feeling part of a planetary ecosystem, and the importance of feeling a part is shown in Shevek's connection to nature during his visit to Urras.

The reduced biodiversity of Anarres also shapes social and political aspects of the society in both positive and negative ways (Heise 103). The positive side is that the society on Anarres do not discriminate between any anyone on the basis that they are less human. There is no exploitation of animals as work force or resources. The negative side is that it prevents affective and social species relations that might create deeper feelings of being a part of an ecosystem (103). On Urras, Shevek sees the nature and cannot help but think that this is what a world is supposed to look like, however, eventually he becomes aware that Urras's diverse national societies have a troubled social and political landscape, and Shevek therefore concludes that this planet, after all, falls short of what a world is supposed to be (103).

Le Guin, then, deals with the effects of resource scarcity and limited biodiversity, suggesting that while it opens up for a more equitable life beyond the consumer capitalist

society, it also limits human experiences that goes beyond material needs (Heise 103).

*Dispossessed's* Anarres puts forward questions of if or to what extent social organisation could be shaped by ecological necessities, and how this “discourse of ecological constraints” can become an ideology (Heise 108). This novel is just one example of how writers of sf have been using biological scarcity as a tool to look at how environmental conditions can “shape human ethics and social organisation, and to what extent humans themselves shape these conditions and their impact on the community” (Heise 111). These are all very important ideas in relation to thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship, because it opens our eyes to the fact the humanity does not live outside nature. The environment affects us and we affect it, not always in a positive way.

#### **2.4 On Being a Planetary Citizen**

In looking at how *Dispossessed* thinks in terms of a planetary citizenship it is interesting to look at environmental themes that have been picked up earlier. Peter G. Stillman is interested in what there is to learn about *Dispossessed* by looking at it from an ecocritical perspective in “The Dispossessed as Ecological Political Theory” from *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed*” (55). In this subsection I will be looking at how *Dispossessed* approaches the environmental topics of species survival and time that Stillman explores and put them in the context of a planetary citizenship.

Building a society on Anarres offers a lot of challenges, especially with the lack of biodiversity on the planet. One such challenge is simply how to ensure continued survival on the planet. Both when faced with the climate and in dealing with the challenges of co-existing with other humans. Species survival is often challenged by disagreements between people, and on Urras and Earth between countries, that leads to conflicts. A theme Stillman picks up is how large-scale violence is not productive in terms of ensuring long term survival on a planet. While there certainly is violence on both Urras and Anarres, there is a clear difference in the scale of the violence, which makes the human species on Urras much less likely of long-term survival than Anarres' set of humans. The difference lies in that Anarres' violence does not threaten the lives of many humans at once and it does not threaten to destroy their habitat, while Urras' larger-scale violence does both (61). Stillman argues that the Anarresti are “not engaged in systemic organized violence against each other” in addition to “not [engaging] in violence against or attempts to dominate nature” (61). There are several things that can explain why the Anarresti does not engage in “systemic organized violence” and why the violence they do have does not destroy or attempt to “dominate nature”. An important factor is that there is no law enforcement on the planet because there are no official laws that

need to be enforced, as mentioned, the closest thing is the PDC, but they have no formal power. As a result, there is no system within the government that will allow for a structured arrangement of violence as punishment for broken laws. As Mathisen and Nadir explores, Anarres is ruled by a strong social conscience and as a result there are consequences for breaking these unwritten laws, however not in the same way punishment works on Urras and our Earth. And because there are no weapons on the planet these sanctions, they do face take the form of excluded from society.

Interestingly in the very first chapter of the novel there is a violent episode that takes the life of one person, but it is not dwelt upon any more than just being mentioned in passing after it happens. Shevek is walking towards the spaceship that will take him to Urras and an angry crowd has gather outside the port to prevent him from leaving to visit their enemy, Urras. The narrator explains that some of the people in the crowd had “come there to kill a traitor,” because he is looked upon as betraying them because he decided to exercise his right to leave the planet to visit Urras. Others were there to simply “prevent him leaving” (Le Guin 621). The narrator notes that “[n]one of them had firearms, though a couple had knives” (Le Guin 621). Before the crowd knows it Shevek is halfway across the distance to the spaceship, and because it was too late for grabbing him some people decide to throw rocks and while the rocks never hit Shevek a two-pound flint hit “one of the Defence crew on the side of the head and killed him on the spot” (Le Guin 621). Then right after this sentence there is a new paragraph where the hatch on the ship closes, and they are about to head out into space. This short episode has a surprisingly violent tone and though it results in the death of an innocent man, the episode is not dwelt upon anymore. The interesting thing is that this is the readers first encounter with the Anarresti inhabitants, a place that later is described as a utopia.

While it is clear from the very beginning that Anarres can be a violence place with violent people, their violent episodes are “issue-specific, brief, without (life-threatening) technological instruments” and they are not connected to any large organization (Stillman 60), like law enforcement, that are planning punishment on one or several people to send a signal or warning to keep following some law. The episode where Anarresti inhabitants try to kill Shevek is issue-specific, brief, and none of them have any life-threatening technological instruments. The closest thing is the knives that some of them carry. Later in the novel, but in the past perspective, another issue-specific episode takes place when Shevek is working physical labour. He meets another man called Shevet, and because their names are so similar it leads to confusion and mishaps, which angers Shevet. After a while, Shevet confronts Shevek because he wants him to call himself something else, however, Shevek does comply.

Shevet challenges Shevek to “a straight forward fist fight” and no one interferes or pays much attention to the fight (Stillman 60). The fight was fair, and no one stood to gain anything from this fight except the two men, so there was no reason for anyone to intervene. The fight was “issue-specific” and very “brief” and fought with nothing but their fists. There was no danger to anyone else in this fight. The absence of “(life threatening) technological instruments” also explains part of the reason why there is no war on the planet. The absence of war means that their nature is shielded from the pollution and destruction that follows such conflict (Stillman 61). In terms of species survival this means that groups of people are spared the large-scale destruction such technologies are capable of. In addition, it also means that nature is spared the mass destruction and pollution such weapons cause to the land where the war is being fought.

These practices and consequences to these actions contrasts with the Earth like Urras where the violence and technology are capable of violence much more resembles our own. On Urras we see a “institutionalized violence” through the war between A-Io and Thu that is being fought in Third World lands and we see how A-Io suppresses the rebellion that Shevek becomes a part of towards the end of the novel with “violence, martial law, and killing” (Stillman 61). This war leads to destructions of large amounts of habitat both for humans and other animals. This type of violence is one we are very familiar with, this type of warfare, not only in Third World countries. It therefore becomes clear that the violence on Urras fought with weapons capable of mass destruction, like we see during what is supposed to be a peaceful protest where the A-Io government starts to shoot at the crowd with machine guns from helicopters (Le Guin 852), is not productive at all in terms of likelihood as a species for survival. While the more personal violence on Anarres is much less likely to ensure continued survival. Some individuals might die, like we see in the first chapter where one on the Defence crew is killed, but there is no mass destruction and no mass killing.

Jameson also comments about how violence is presented in the novel. However, while Stillman reflects upon it in the context of species survival, Jameson find it noteworthy that Le Guin rejects institutionalized violence, not violence itself (275). About the fight scene between Shevek and Shevet, Jameson says that there is nothing more shocking than the brutality of the scene (275). Jameson argues that “Utopia is not a place in which humanity is freed from violence, but rather one in which it is released from the multiple determinisms (economic, political, social) of history itself” (275). Le Guin’s vision is then “a return to fundamentals rather than some beautification of existence” (Jameson 275). This is interesting in terms of a planetary citizenship, because it points out that it is probably not possible to get

rid of violence altogether. However, it is possible to scale it down by not allowing the use of mass destructing devices, and as a result, it affects less nature and less people. Also, in relation to Jameson's comment that it is no beautification of existence, in terms of a planetary citizenship, it is interesting because it highlights how both a utopia and a planetary citizenship does not have unrealistic expectations of what life is supposed to be like. Even in a utopia like Anarres there is violence, but the goal is work to reduce the repercussions of it.

Another theme that Stillman picks up is how one needs to make choices that one will benefit from in the future. What this means is that to evaluate the likelihood of species survival or sustainability one needs to look at it from a long timescale. Stillman explains that species survival and ecosystem sustainability are long-term worries that one can only evaluate over long periods of time (63). Le Guin, similar to other ecological thinkers, is fully aware of evolution and change, and therefore, can explore themes related to how human beings and other species interact and change over time (Stillman 63). Le Guin's awareness of evolution and change is present at many times during the novel.

One of these is when Shevek is talking with a friend called Vea when he is on Urras and he explains that the Anarresti "follow one law, only one, the law of human evolution" (Stillman 63). What Shevek means here, in Stillman's opinion, is that individuals need to act and change for a society to live, change, adapt, and survival. The Anarresti society is one of revolution, and only through revolution will they evolve (Stillman 63). Attempts by Anarresti to stop change by rejection contact with Urras, who represents their past, and A-Io's attempt to ignore Anarres, who represents their possible future, Stillman argues, ends up being self-narrowing and self-limiting (Stillman 63). "The law of human evolution," then, means for Shevek that the only law they should follow is the laws that says that humanity needs to keep changing and evolving, never standing still. Just like evolution actually works, it keeps changing over time, while one might not notice the changes over a short period of time, it will be noticeable after enough time has passed. Rejecting their past, like Anarres is doing by ignoring the existence of Urras, leads to forgetting what they ran away from and what they are trying to evolve away from, which the Anarresti society ends up almost changing towards what they wanted to escape. During his time on Anarres, Shevek discovers a hierarchy within the institute and the PDC, and because they are rejecting connection with Urras, they seem to have stopped trying to not become like their capitalistic society.

In addition to this understanding of evolution and time, Stillman argues that Le Guin "proposes a kind of temporal or time ethic similar to Aldo Leopold's "land ethic," which "changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member

and citizen of it” (64). Le Guin’s time ethic, according to Stillman, means an understanding of how humanity cannot conquer the future, only act in the present in ways that affect the future. Which means that humanity today need to accept the responsibility for the moral choices they make in the present, which affects the future (Stillman 64). Similarly, Leopold’s ideas of moving Homo sapiens away from “conqueror of the land community” to simply “citizen of it,” Stillman suggests that Le Guin’s “time ethic” moves people away from trying to conquer the future to instead acting responsibly in the present with the knowledge that their actions affect how the future turns out. What both Leopold and Le Guin’s ideas, then, seek to do is move away from trying to control nature or time, but instead “working with in, not against it” (64). Le Guin’s “time ethic,” then, views time as a part of nature, and that “human beings must be conscious of and come to grips with time as integral to our natural world” (65). What Stillman’s suggested “time ethic” means then, is essentially that humans need to work with time and make sustainable choices in present time. Instead of trying to conquer the future and plan ahead to a future that might never happen. Becoming citizens of present time and make choices that one knows will affect the future in positive ways.

Stillman’s themes of what actions are most productive for species survival and the importance of being aware of both the past, present, and future are all relevant in the context of a planetary citizenship. Because in becoming more environmentally aware, it adds some weight to our thinking when we can look at our actions and consider them in terms of whether or not they are helpful in ensuring the survival of our species over time. War and environmental destruction, as shown, are clearly not in humanity’s best interest. And while it is not realistic to end violence once and for all, imagining a society where these large-scale weapons are not available helps us see what is causing the problem. The problem is not the violence itself, but the devices that scales up the violence making the fight unfair. Further on, being aware of time and opening ourselves up to thinking both about our past and our future in order to keep progressing forward, but also avoiding the mistakes of the past. Rejecting either one will lead to a society that is standing still, refusing to change. It is therefore important to embrace the idea that one should always keep evolving, never holding on too tight to an idea, because as evolution shows, we are constantly changing. In terms of a planetary citizenship, this idea that we are always changing is important, because it underlines that one can never achieve a perfect planetary citizenship, because it is always evolving and changing.



## Chapter Three: Planetary Thinking and Planetary Citizenship

### 3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will compare *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* and their environmental thinking and close read examples from the texts of how they are thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. They are both constructing thought experiments that prompts the reader to reconsider their idea of what it means to be a citizen. In terms of a planetary citizenship, it seems that *Galápagos* is more in the planetary aspect of it, while *Dispossessed* works more to reconceptualise the citizenship part of it. However, both narratives work to think both about the planetary and the citizenship aspect. While it would be impossible to abandon the current way of thinking about citizenship completely, I argue that there could be benefits to imagining oneself as a dual citizen. Being both a citizen of a country and a citizen of the planet. Heise points out in her discussion of having a sense of planet, that one cannot abandon the local perspective, instead it means to add unto what one already knows and seek to develop one's understanding of the interconnection between the local and the planetary. The same goes for citizenship, in both being a citizen of one's country while also working on understanding how the country is connected to the planetary and how the planetary affects ones country, it opens to a new perspective on climate change. What I will do in this chapter is pick some longer scenes and argue for their themes and relevance and what they say about a planetary citizenship.

### 3.1 Comparing findings in *Galápagos* and *The Dispossessed*

In discussing *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* and the critical work that has been done with them, there are some ideas and themes that overlap. Jarvis explains how in Vonnegut's *Sirens of Titan*, the novel "offers important environmental planetary visions as characters contemplate tiny, fragile Earth and its place in the vast universe" (44). This is also the case in *Dispossessed*, because in writing about two planets the narrative moves the perspective to a planetary one. Therefore, when the protagonist Shevek travels to Urras in the first chapter, the narrative immediately scales the perspective to a planetary one as he leaves his own planet and travels to Urras. In the spaceship Shevek watch on a screen the outside of the ship, watching as his planet changes as they get further away. After take-off the narrator vocalizes Shevek's thoughts as he is watching his planet change as the spaceship moves further into space, "[i]t was not a plain, or a bowl but a sphere, a ball of white stone falling down in blackness, falling away. It was his world... The world had fallen out from under him, and he was left alone" (Le Guin 623). He is watching as his whole world comes small and insignificant. In comparing his world to "a ball of white stone," it reflects how tiny the planet

is and seeing it “falling down in blackness” underlines how insignificant it seems as they are flying away. Because the protagonist travels to a planet that is much like Earth, the reader experiences their own planet from the perspective of someone who thinks this environment and culture is alien. This allows the reader to straight away get an outsider’s perspective to a place that is very familiar to them.

As mentioned, Vonnegut has said that he writes unrealistic planets to make Earth more important. In contrast, I think Le Guin is coming at the creation of the planets from another perspective, at least in terms of Urras. In making it deliberately realistic and familiar, but having the reader experience this environment from be an alien, the reader gets to contemplate everything they take for granted about their environment. And while Anarres’ utopia is unrealistic to achieve on such a large scale, Le Guin still makes the society itself as realistic as possible. By fleshing out the society and making it ambiguous, it makes it feel realistic in terms of the people there and how the society works. By not romanticising the utopia on Anarres but including episodes of violence and a hidden hierarchy and power struggle in this anarchy, it makes it feel realistic and human. So, by making Urras Earth like and the utopia on Anarres realistic in terms of the society there, the reader gets to contemplate their own Earth in comparison with these planets, because both planets have traits that can be compared with Earth.

Both *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* are dealing with evolution and time scale, however, they go about it in slightly different directions, according to the critics. While *Galápagos* has the clear connection to Darwin’s evolution as Davis and Hicks discusses and the million yearlong narrative timeline, *Dispossessed*’s narrative deals with time and change more subtly. Stillman points out how *Dispossessed* deals with issues of the past and future. In terms of a society evolving over time, one could say that evolution does not happen in a vacuum of the present. Therefore, for a society like Anarres or Urras to be able to continue to evolve forwards one needs to be aware of and accept both the past and the future. Hicks points out in relation to the evolution of humanity in *Galápagos* how evolution does not stand still and what is valued in the present time might not be valuable later as the species and environment continues to evolve. Therefore, Anarres’ attempt at standing still and refusing to deal with Urras who is their past results in them starting to move away from their utopian ideals and move towards the hierarchical and power struggling society they originally escaped from. As Mathisen explores, the protagonist Shevek realizes that in a society without laws or punishments they have over time made laws of conventional behaviour. This happened because they made the mistake of not continuing to evolve and change.

In *Galápagos*, the evolutionary aspect is clear in that the human species evolves to become a new creature. Looking at the evolutionary aspect in *Dispossessed*, it is interesting how the Anarresti people have not evolved together with the life on their planet. Which, as mentioned, has led to Takver, the protagonist's partner, to lacking a feeling of not being a part of the ecosystem there. Which leads to questions in relation to their place on the planet and the ecosystem there. Hicks discusses in relation to *Galápagos* how humanity's culture is only in our best interest for survival at this moment, but there might come a time when this is not the case anymore. However, the settlers of Anarres built their society on a planet in an ecosystem they had not naturally evolved with. Nadir and Heise discuss how the Anarresti's willingness to sacrifice everything beyond the bare necessities is what makes it possible for them to survive in this harsh environment. In some way the trait that happened to be optimal for survival on Anarres was their willingness to sacrifice a comfortable life. One might still question their place in the ecosystem on this planet where life has not evolved beyond the oceans. In *Galápagos*, when the islanders first arrive at the island Santa Rosalina when they shipwreck, they did not realize what they were doing to their environment by not harvesting their food sustainably. In contrast, the settlers on Anarres must have been aware from the very beginning that they needed to live sustainably and in accept an absolute scarcity, being careful not to harm their ecosystem in any way. The narrator explains how "[m]an fitted himself with care and risk into this narrow ecology. If he fished, but not too greedily, and if he cultivated, using mainly organic wastes for fertilizer, he could fit in" (Le Guin 763). Interestingly they managed to fit into this ecosystem, but only through careful consideration of their actions and the consequences of all their actions. In a way one could consider them a foreign animal species and they could have become an invasive species. However, because they fitted themselves with care into this environment, not trying to take over or radically change or drain the environment, they might have managed to find their place within this ecosystem. Maybe they are more like an introduced species who happened to have the right traits to be able to survive in this environment.

*Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* are thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship because they refuse to accept that it is too late for humanity to change course in terms of acting better for the planet. Both Davis and Jarvis mention how *Galápagos* is a hopeful novel despite all the destructive human behaviours the narrator points to, because the narrator still chooses to believe humanity is not bad. What both *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* shows is that despite a hopeless situation, thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship allows for a perspective showing that there is still a point in trying to make a positive impact. Both Davis and Jarvis

points to how the narrator rejects his father Kilgore Trout's invitation into the afterlife towards the end of *Galápagos* in the second part, chapter seven, choosing to believe that humanity still can change. His father, in his attempt to get Leon to follow him into the afterlife says,

“The more you learn about people, the more disgusted you'll become...

“Need I tell you that these same wonderful animals... are at this very moment proud as Punch to have weapons in place, all set to go at a moment's notice, guaranteed to kill everything?

“Need I tell you that this once beautiful and nourishing planet when viewed from the air now resembles the diseased organs of poor Roy Hepburn... and that the apparent cancers, growing for the sake of growth along, and consuming all and poisoning all, are the cities of your beloved human beings?

“Need I tell you that these animals have made such a botch of things that they can no longer imagine decent lives for their own grandchildren... and will consider it a miracle of there is anything left to eat or enjoy by the year two thousand, now only fourteen years away?

“Like the people on this accursed ship, my boy, they are led by captains who have no charts or compasses, and who deal from minute to minute with no problem more substantial than how to protect their self-esteem.” (749-750)

These are all comments the narrator Leon have been making throughout the narrative, however, when hearing it from his father he rejects it. What is so telling about this is that when the narrator hears all this, he still wants to stay on earth for a million years to see what happens to humanity. And because Kilgore is Vonnegut's alter ego, these are in some ways Vonnegut his own thoughts about humanity. In the first line he says that the more the narrator will learn about humanity, the more he will hate humanity. This relates to thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship, because it points out how one needs to see the total picture and learn some truths that one cannot unlearn, as Morton discusses in relation to the ecological thought. However, what makes the narrator think in terms of a planetary citizenship is that while he learns these things, he still chooses to believe that there is hope for change.

Further on, Kilgore points out how humanity is very proud to have weapons that are “guaranteed to kill everything.” These weapons are not just guaranteed to kill other people, but also everything around it, like infrastructure or nature. This is similar to what Stillman points to in his argument about species survival, that the people on Urras are much less likely to survive as a species because of the large-scale violence that destroys everything, including

the environment. Vonnegut and Le Guin has the same observations about how weapons kill more than just other people. Further on, he points out what humans have done to this “once beautiful and nourishing planet” and how bad it looks from the air and how the cities are consuming too much and poisoning everything. His comments have a planetary perspective, explaining how the planet used to be nourishing, but because of humanity this has changed because of the way cities are polluting.

One of the most important observations from Kilgore is how people are being led by “captains who have no charts or compasses” and the most important problems for them to solve seems to be “how to protect their self-esteem.” Kilgore seems to be saying that the people in charge have no idea what they are doing, and what their plan is long term. And that what seems to be the most important thing is to protect their own image and themselves. This points out that how Kilgore is describing humanity, they are only focused on themselves in the present. While in terms of a planetary citizenship, it would be important to also include the non-human in their planning for the future, not only looking out for their own comfort right here and now. But also considering the implications of the non-human aspects of the planet, and equally important, the consequences for future humans. The climate change that is happening now is the result of choices that were made by previous generations who were only looking out for themselves. But thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship would be thinking about the consequences to both the human and the non-human, not only looking out for their own self-esteem in the present.

As mentioned, these comments that Kilgore makes are thoughts that Leon also has throughout the narrative. Leon is telling this story from a million years in the future, however, when he first hears these thoughts from his father, he is a ghost in 1986. His father arrives for the first time when the islanders are on the cruise ship in the middle of nowhere about the find land. While Leon has at this point observed the majority of the narrative events that take place, but he will not tell this story for another million years, so all the comments he has about humanity comes from his narration of these events a million years in the future. After his Kilgore’s rant, he goes on to say that Leon is just like his mother whose favourite quote is the epigraph of *Galápagos* which is a quote from Anne Frank that says, “In spite of everything, I still believe people are really good at heart” (Vonnegut 561). When then his father does not want to show Leon his mother who is already in the afterlife, Leon hears Mary on the boat saying something he cannot quite make out, and when he takes steps back to hear what she is saying the blue tunnel disappears and he is stuck there for a million years.

In the next chapter, he explains that he has now serves his million-year sentence and he concludes that his mother was right “Even in the darkest times, there really was still hope for humankind” (Vonnegut 754). So, despite seeing everything bad humanity is doing when he is a ghost the first couple of years, he is still interested in watching what happens to humanity. Then after waiting a million years for his father to come back and after watching what happens to humanity, he concludes that all hope is not lost. In seeing that humanity can change courses he decides that humanity can change for the better. Like Jarvis and Hicks points out, because of how little the reader gets to see from the future, the focus of *Galápagos* is what happens in the present time, and therefore the hope lies in that they managed to change course. From a destructive species, to one that does not harm its own habitat.

As Jarvis and Davis mentions, the focus of *Galápagos* is not how we should turn into seals to save the future, but rather that change is possible. In the very last chapter of *Galápagos*, the narrator reflects the story he has been telling and says,

When my tale began, it appeared that the earthling part of the clockwork of the universe was in terrible danger, since many of its parts, which is to say people, no longer fit in anywhere, and were damaging all the parts around them as well as themselves. I would have said back then that the damage was beyond repair.

Not so!

Thanks to certain modifications in the design of human beings, I see no reason why the earthling part of the clockwork can't go on ticking forever the way it is ticking now. (777)

These thoughts reflect how the narrative focuses on how humanity should change in the present time. Similar to Stillman's discussion of Le Guin's time ethic in *Dispossessed*, where he argues that she understands how one cannot and should not try to conquer the future, but rather act in the present in ways that will positively affect the future. The first part is the one that mirrors our own situation, maybe more today than it did when the novel was first published. Leon explains that “the earthling part of the clockwork of the universe was in terrible danger” because people “no longer fit anywhere.” While the settlers on Anarres in *Dispossessed* were careful in integrating themselves into the ecosystem there, Leon's comment reflects how humans used to have their place in the ecosystem, but no longer does because they are “damaging all the parts around them as well as themselves.” It prompts the reader to consider what place the human species now have in the ecosystem. Part of a bigger “clockwork,” meaning that we are only one of the working parts of an interconnected ecosystem. But what humanity have been doing so far is not contribute to the bigger

machinery, which means that it cannot work properly, because the function humans used to have are no longer being fulfilled.

But the salvation of the human species in the novel is the “modification in the design of human beings” and when this change has occurred, Leon sees no reason as to why not “the earthling part of the clockwork can’t go on ticking forever.” In other words, once humanity found their place in the clockwork of the universe, there seems to be no reason for humanity to ever cease existing. However, Davis might argue that the human species that Leon is referring to who have changed to fit into the clockwork again, the seal-like creatures, are not humans. Which might mean that humanity as they are defined today have stopped existing. But another form of humans has taken over, and as Hicks might argue, because they came from the current human form and became the seal-like creatures, they have replaced their ancestors because their traits were better suited for survival. Either way, the modification led to the human species not posing a threat to the rest of the clockwork anymore. However, the change that occurs in *Galápagos* is not the solution. The solution instead the idea of change itself, a change that might make humanity find its place within the clockwork once again. The seal-like creatures are made purposely silly to take the focus away from what the solution might take the shape as, and instead focus on the fact that change itself is necessary.

Though Leon wanted to see what happened to humanity, he might not have wanted to stay there for a million years. Kilgore’s speech about humanity might have scared Leon a little. However, just as he is about to join his after in the afterlife, he hears Mary shout something from the boat. And because Leon takes a step back to hear what she is saying, his father disappears and the entrance to the afterlife disappears with him. So, it seems that Leon was left to roam the Earth accidentally, just like everything else in the novel has happened because of a series of accidents and coincidences. However, what Leon tellingly discovers after a million years observing humanity is that “Mother was right: Even in the darkest times, there really was still hope for humankind” (754) He says that “mother was right,” revealing that he has been thinking about his father’s words and they have been sticking with him these million years, and we see them reflected in his comments about humans throughout the narrative. When Leon was left on Earth, it looked dark for humanity because of the financial crisis, the famine, and possibly a third world war. However, “even in the darkest times,” which is these challenges that humanity was facing when he was first left to roam the earth, “there really was still hope for humankind”. Because he saw humanity change their current course of action and start living in a different way. Leon having observed the earth for a million years have seen most of humanity die out and seen what is left change for the better.

In *Dispossessed*, to work towards being a planetary citizen, it is important to be able to think in planetary a planetary perspective. To be able view oneself as a citizen of the planet, rather than being constrained by nations or countries, as Heise discusses, one needs to move towards a less territorial sense of planet. All in all, planetary citizenship is about making species survival more likely in the long term. As Stillman discusses the implications of the difference in scale of violence in *Dispossessed* on species survival, this is how one should consider the implications of all humans actions. Towards the end of *Dispossessed* everything is put into perspective when the reader learns about the fate of our own Earth, referred to as Terra, in Le Guin's storyworld. Warning about the future of the human species is what a lot of apocalyptic and dystopian environmental literature does. Though there is an apocalyptic like description in *Dispossessed*, it does not necessarily read like a scary warning. Towards the end of *Dispossessed*, in chapter 11, after Shevek has escaped the demonstration where the government shoots at the crows and survived for a couple of days in hiding, he finds his way to the Terran embassy. This is where the Terran ambassador Keng explains to Shevek what happened to her Earth Terra, which is a reference to the reader's Earth. Shevek explains all the problems he has encountered on Urras, and he cannot believe that Keng actually likes it there. But she explains that for her Urras, compared to her planet. is paradise. She explains that,

“My world, my Earth, is a ruin. A planet spoiled by the human species. We multiplied and gobbled and fought until there was nothing left, and then we died. We controlled neither appetite not violence; we did not adapt. We destroyed ourselves. But we destroyed the world first. There are no forests left on my Earth. The air is grey, the sky is grey, it is always hot. It is habitable, it is still habitable, but not as this world is. This is a living world, a harmony. Mine is a discord. You Odonians chose a desert; we Terrans made a desert... There are nearly half a billion of us now. Once there were nine billion. You can see the old cities still everywhere. The bones and bricks go to dust, but the little pieces of plastic never do – they never adapt either. We failed as a species, as a social species... Well, we had saved what could be saved, and made a kind of life in the ruins, on Terra, in the only way it could be done: by total centralization... The absolute regimentation of each life toward the goal of racial survival.” (889)

Her description of her own planet puts Shevek's experience of Urras and Anarres into perspective. Her Earth “is a ruin,” because the inhabitants continued to practice their unsustainable habits. It was “spoiled by the human species,” explaining that they “multiplied



and gobbled and fought,” that they “destroyed” themselves and the world. She is thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship, she considers both the human and the non-human aspects of life on her planet and what consequences human action has caused. In her explanation of consequences, she mentions things that have long been warned by scientists might happen if humanity do not change their habits and, in a way, Terra shows what might happen to the real Earth if these habits does not change. In her presentation of her Earth, it reads a little like a dystopian warning. There are “no forests left,” “the air is grey,” “it is always hot,” which are the consequences of climate change that is already happening. She explains that it is habitable, but it is not habitable in the same way that naturally abundant Urras is with its greenery and complex ecosystem. She explains that the “little pieces of plastic” never go to dust or adapt, another warning from scientists. Maybe more relevant now than ever. Then she explains how they have tried to save themselves, which is by “total centralization” and “the absolute regimentation of each life” with the single goal of “racial survival.” In other words, there is no place for anything other than plain survival on her planet. It seems that the people there cannot be trusted to have any freedom at all, because complete freedom was what led them into the destruction of their planet. Warning readers that the consequences of continued pollution and destruction is not just a ruined environment, but it might also lead to their freedom being taken away.

The placement of this scene in *Dispossessed* is significant because the reader does hardly learn anything significant about Terra until this moment. Looked at within the context of everything that has happened before, it does not have the same apocalyptic or dystopian warning signs as the scene does in isolation. This is the only time in the novel Terra is described in detail, Terra is mentioned before, but only is passing. I think more than anything this description of Earth is a comment on Le Guin’s observations of the consequences of continued pollution. Keng does not mention anything about the planet trying to slow down climate change or any other preventive actions, the way she describes her planet, it seems that they just let it happen and did not realize or care before it was too late. Just like in Kilgore’s story in *Galápagos*, where the humanoids ignored their most pressing survival problems until it was nearly too late. Jarvis and Hicks argue that in *Galápagos* the limited narrative space given to the future seal-like creatures suggests that they are not important, likewise, this possible future Earth is given limited narrative space. Which suggests that what happens to this Earth is not what the reader should take away from this story.

Just like in *Galápagos*, *Dispossessed* presents a belief that it is possible for humanity to make changes to not destroy the environment. However, like *Galápagos*, *Dispossessed*

does not present the reader with a blueprint for solution. The narrative presents some possible directions civilisation might go, which is that of Urras, Anarres, or Terra. Urras being the planet that is the most like our own at the moment seems to be the most likely to happen. Their planetary citizenship is enforced by the state by laws and regulations. Anarres is the most extreme, because it requires a lot of structural changes that will be hard to do and enforce with such a large and spread population. And then there is Terra, which is not really a solution more of an example of what might happen if one decides to do nothing. They survive, but not in an ideal way. These three options might be divided into combinations of two or even a combination of all three. The point is that there is not just one way of working towards thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. The Urrasti have managed to control their natural resource use, though they might have some ways to go in terms of educating their citizens of thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. For example, the doctor who do not know where the trash goes. And Urras always thinking about cost in terms of waste, which I will get back to. There is still some way to go, but they are trying. Anarres, is an extreme version of a planetary citizenship born out of the necessity to survive and sacrifice to be able to live on their planet. And Terra seems to be a forced planetary citizenship, but maybe it is better late than never. At least they are still alive.

### **3.2 Thinking in Planetary Terms**

An important part of a planetary citizenship is to be able to think in terms of planet. Not just to be able to think about the planet itself, but be able to understand, as Heise discusses in her argument for moving towards having a sense of planet, how the local is connected to the planetary and how the planetary affects the local. In a narrative this comes across both in the narrative's perspective, for example in dealing with whole planets or whole species. But also, in how the narrative makes observations and descriptions that prompts the reader to think in terms of the planetary.

The novels think in planetary terms in different ways. Where Vonnegut's narrator might directly look upon the human species from another perspective, Le Guin's narrator has a more indirect contemplation on larger issues that are planetary. Starting with *Galápagos*, the narrator has a direct way of communicating with the reader and making them contemplate looking at our planet from another perspective. Forcing the reader to think in planetary terms. The narrator mentions problems and then scales the perspective up to give the reader some outside perspective of the problem. What get the narrative moving in the novel is the financial crisis that leads to a lot of other problems, which gets the cruise cancelled. What the narrator does is take an outsider's perspective of this problem and how this is just another problem that

had started in the human brain, meaning that the problem is entirely man made, and then he thinks about how this all has to do with people's opinions of the planet. He observes that

From all the violence people were doing to themselves and each other, and to all other living things, for that matter, a visitor from another planet might have assumed that the environment had gone haywire, and that the people were in such a frenzy because Nature was about to kill them all.

But the planet a million years ago was as moist and nourishing as it is today – and unique, in that respect, in the entire Milky Way. All that had changed was people's opinion of the place (580).

What the narrator does here is think in planetary terms and helping the reader put into perspective what is happening on the planet. It starts with thinking about small scale with "violence people were doing to themselves and each other," then it moves on to larger scale more off hand, more as a comment with "and to all other living things, for that matter." But then he really scales it up and imagines what a visitor from another planet might see if they were looking at the planet. And Leon imagines that such an outside perspective would see an environment that "had gone haywire" and that people were acting the way they were because "Nature was about to kill them all." He imagines that an outsider would see people acting this way because Nature was treating them badly in return and was working to kill them. This prompts the reader to think in a planetary perspective.

However, as the narrator notes, nature is not trying to kill humanity. Because despite how humanity is treating the planet, it is a nourishing place. What has happened is that people's opinions of this place have changed. Though he does not explain what opinion he thinks people have of this place, it can be judged from most people's actions that they do not think this place is something of value because of the way they are treating it. Because if they appreciated this place, then they would act as if the environment and the planet was something to take care of. What the narrative does is first just observe how people are violent to each other, but then scales it up to all other living things and then moves beyond this imagining looking at our planet from an outside perspective. These observations prompt thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship because it looks at humanity from a planetary perspective, pointing out that humanity is not treating the planet very well. The narrator puts it so simply that it feels very illogical that humanity is destroying the environment, because the planet is nourishing and unique. What *Dispossessed* does, in contrast, is use the narrative and the descriptions to contemplate ideas both on a local and planetary scale. It seems to be

always working to both bring a focus on place and at the same time, often within the same sentence, bring a focus to a planetary perspective.

The narrative in *Dispossessed* works to create a connection between the local and the planetary by moving its focus from the immediate surroundings to a reflection on planetary scale. For example, in chapter one the narrative does this in just a couple of sentences when Shevek first arrives on Urras as a guest and is driven from the spaceship to where he is going to stay, the narrator vocalizes Shevek's thoughts as he finally realizes what is outside the car window and the narrator then builds upon Shevek's thoughts to reflect upon a bigger picture. As they are driving Shevek thinks,

What was the thicker darkness that flowed along endlessly by the road? Trees? Could they have been driving, ever since they left the city, among trees? The Iotic word came into his mind: "forest." ... The trees went on and on, on the next hillside and the next and the next, standing in the sweet chill of the fog, endless, a forest all over the world, a still striving interplay of lives, a dark movement of leaves in the night. (635)

The narrative starts by vocalizing Shevek's thoughts as he questions the surroundings outside. His first question is what the "thicker darkness" by the road is, separating it from the general darkness of the night and experiencing it as something that "flowed along endlessly" as they are driving. His focus is very local and place oriented because his focus is just the trees. Shevek answers his own question with another question "Trees?". Shevek studies the thicker darkness and questions if he is correct in assuming that they are trees. And questions if they could have been driving "among trees" ever since they left the city. There seems to be an amazement with the trees and the idea that they might have been driving all this time among them.

The narrator explains that all this thinking about trees makes Shevek think about the Iotic word "forest". Iotic is one of the languages spoken on Urras. What is interesting here is that Iotic is a second language for Shevek that he has learned by himself on his home planet Anarres. It is therefore unclear if Shevek thinks about this word because he thinks it is a synonym for "trees," or if he understands the difference between them. This being the first chapter we have not learned yet that to what the ecology of Anarres actually is like and we have not seen how Shevek has been part of a tree planting crew (Le Guin 658). While Shevek has an understanding of trees, because of the lack of forests and lack of land animals and plants on Anarres, there is a chance that Shevek's actual understanding of forests are limited.

Then the narrator takes over, no longer vocalizing Shevek's thoughts. It muses over the trees they are driving by and briefly reflects upon what a forest is. The narrator explains

how the trees “went on and on” over the hillside and “the next and the next,” painting a picture not just some trees standing by the road, but rather a plethora of trees that goes on and on. The narrator remarks how the trees are “endless”, how they never seem to end. This moves towards a dwelling upon the planet as a whole, and how the forests here is endless because of the planet’s natural abundance. It paints a picture of trees that covers the whole surface of the planet. Then the narrator, like Shevek, connects the trees with the forest, however the narrator seems to have a better grasp of what a forest is compared to just a collection of trees. The narrator remarks “a forest all over the world,” which might be a metaphor for what Shevek is feeling while driving by the endless trees, a feeling that the trees expand around the whole world because this is the only part of this world he has seen. Or it might be the narrator’s observation of how this forest actually do expand all over the world, in contrast to Anarres that is mostly dry desert and shrubs. The narrator’s understanding of forests and interconnectedness is shown with what comes right after the comment about how the forest is all over the world. “[A] still striving interplay of lives,” the narrator remarks. It seems the narrator is reflecting upon how this forest and this world is still flourishing in an abundant nature.

The narrator shows an understanding of how the forest is more than just trees, it is an “interplay of lives”. Shevek is just reminded of the word “forest,” however, the narrator reflects upon how a forest that expands all over the world is a complex interplay of lives, it is more than just trees. Within a single sentence, the narrator gradually moves the perspective from a focus on the local, the trees, to a reflection upon the interplay of lives that exists within a forest and within this world. The narrative is showing an awareness of how natural processes are connected and the narrative is therefore working to have a sense of planet, working to move beyond a focus on the local. Then in the last part of the sentence, the narrative pulls the reader back into a focus on the local by observing, “a dark movement of leaves”. While it works to establish a sense of planet, it also works to connect the planetary with the local. Working to pull the reader out of the narrative to reflect upon planetary issues, but then always pulling the reader back into the narrative with a focus on the local, like it does here with a focus on movements in the leaves. An interesting aspect of this scene is that the more one learns about Shevek during the past perspective chapters, the more interesting Shevek’s thoughts and the narrator’s observations get.

*Galápagos*’ approach and *Dispossessed*’s approach are very different. While they both encourage readers to think in planetary terms, one is more obvious than the other. *Galápagos*’ narrator almost directly asks the reader to imagine what someone from another planet would

see if they were to observe what was happening on earth. While *Dispossessed*'s narrator subtly moves the scale up from a focus on place to contemplate bigger and bigger ideas. Going from tree to forest to the interplay of lives in the world and then back to a movement of the leaves. Here the reader is not asked to contemplate something the same way *Galápagos*' narrator does it, instead it moves back and forth in its description of the world around, making the reader imagine the things the narrator is describing and thinking about, and joining the narrator on the journey from a single tree to the interplay of lives in the world.

Further on, in terms of planetary thinking is how Heise talks about that keeping a sense of place is important in that it should lead people to ask questions about the planetary. However, in *Dispossessed* this happens the other way around. This awareness of local ecology that leads to ask questions of global connectivity is what the narrator does in the quote about Shevek's observation of the trees. It builds on Shevek's question about the trees and connects them to the forest and the world, and then the interplay of lives that exists within the world. This car ride and Shevek's observation of the trees, might lead Shevek to question the interconnectedness of the nature here. However, what later reflections show is that Shevek understands how a world is supposed to have a diverse ecosystem. Something he might have learned either in school on Anarres or from his biologist partner. What he is missing however, is an understanding of the local ecology on Urras and his understanding of the planetary makes him ask questions about the local.

For Shevek looking at the local environment makes him think in planetary terms and this further on leads him to question the unfamiliar local aspects of this environment. Because Shevek is used to thinking in terms of a planetary perspective, it is natural for him to ask these questions. Shevek is experiencing a new ecosystem, in many ways opposite to the one he comes from. Where his planet is dry and barren, this one is green and abundant. This inner reflections upon the world of Urras and his own world, leads him to question the local aspects of Urras, because that is an aspect of the planet he seems to be the least familiar with. When Shevek is looking out the window from his room on Urras, he reflects upon the view which makes him think in planetary terms,

It was the most beautiful view Shevek had ever seen. The tenderness and vitality of the colors, the mixture of rectilinear human design and powerful, proliferate natural contours, the variety and harmony of the elements, gave an impression of complex wholeness such as he had never seen, except, perhaps, foreshadowed on a small scale in certain serene and thoughtful human faces.

Compared to this, every scene Anarres could offer... was meager: barren, arid, and

inchoate... Even where men farmed Anarres most closely, their landscape was like a crude sketch in yellow chalk compared with this fulfilled magnificence of life....

This is what a world is supposed to look like, Shevek thought.

And somewhere, out there in that blue and green splendor, something was singing: a small voice, high up, starting and ceasing, incredibly sweet. What is it? A little sweet, wild voice, a music midair. (668)

The narrator explains how the view outside the window was “the most beautiful” Shevek has ever seen, here focusing on the local and the immediate surroundings. It focuses on the “the colors” and the mix of “rectilinear human design” and “natural contours.” The narrative brings the reader along on Shevek’s observations of the local environment he is seeing for the first time. Further on, the narrator comments on “the variety and harmony of the elements,” maybe it means the variety of the types of building and the types of natural aspects, like trees, bushes and flowers. Harmony of these elements, meaning that no element, either human made or natural, has taken too much space or seems to be out of control. Considering these things, the narrator then brings the perspective to more planetary terms by commenting on how this “gave an impression of complex wholeness.” Meaning, all these individual aspects of the view, all the local observations of the environment, gave the impression that it all belonged to something bigger, something complex, and something whole.

Then the thinking beyond mere place, but rather how these aspects are a part of a “complex wholeness.” It is such an awareness that the local environment is an important part of a much bigger complex global ecology that give the narrative the feeling that it is thinking in planetary terms. The narrator explains how Shevek thinks that “this is what a world is supposed to look like,” meaning that this “complex wholeness” is what he thinks a world should have. The narrator explains that compared to what Shevek is seeing Anarres “was meager, barren, arid, and inchoate.” Shevek’s conclusion that a complex wholeness like he is seeing here is what a world is supposed to look like comes from a reasonable place, considering the narrator’s explanation of what Anarres looks like compared to Shevek’s view. Anarres is very clearly missing this natural ecosystem and Shevek’s conclusion therefore makes sense. This reflection on what a world is supposed to look like shows an awareness of how complex global systems are and Shevek then shows an ability to think in planetary terms, going beyond thinking about just the plants outside his window, but how an entire world is supposed to have a “complex wholeness” like what he is seeing. However, what Shevek is missing is an understanding of the local on this planet. After a consideration of what a world is supposed to look like and not, the narrative pulls the reader back into the current moment

and questions the local ecology as he hears “[a] little sweet, wild voice, a music midair.” Though Shevek has an ability to think in planetary terms, he struggles with the local because Anarres is missing the abundance of both animal and plant life one finds on Urras. When he then hears this singing voice, that turns out to be a bird, he is confused. He does not understand what it is because he has never lived among a “complex wholeness.” Because a “complex wholeness” involves animals as well as the nature Shevek sees, and what he has not been able to think about in the same way as the plant species is the animal species that he now walks among. Here the narrative moves from a consideration of what a planet is supposed to look like, to questions about the local. The singing voice pulls the narrative away from a consideration of planetary issues to full focus on what this singing creature is.

Similar to how *Galápagos* asks the reader to consider what a visitor from another planet would see if they looked at the planet from the outside, this asks the reader to instead of considering the questions one might ask about place as an alien coming from another planet. What this does is that it gives the idea of place and local a new perspective. Because the question is coming from someone who has a grasp of the planetary and what the planetary environment should be looking like, the question about place comes from a completely different place and it underlines exactly how alien Shevek is. A planetary thinker asking questions about place underlines the importance of how it is not just one or the other, but rather a mix of them both. And that thinking planetary includes thinking about place because it is all connected.

### 3.3 Thinking about Citizenship and Belonging

*Galápagos* and *Dispossessed* both work to make the reader reconsider their ideas about both citizenship and belonging. Looking at humanity’s actions from the perspective of an alien from another planet, there seems to be a sense that humanity has set itself apart from nature. Working to change it to better fit our own needs and ideas of what a good life looks like. What these novels are doing is putting this into perspective and asking the reader to reconsider. Reconsider their ideas of what it means to be a citizen and what it means to belong in the world.

*Galápagos* thinks about belonging and peoples place in the universe. In thinking about citizenship and belonging the narrator remembers one of his father’s novels. As mentioned, the narrator’s father is sf writer Kilgore Trout, and in many of Vonnegut’s work summaries of Kilgore’s bizarre work is included. The one the narrator remembers is no different. He says,

I am reminded of one of my father’s novels, *The Era of Hopeful Monsters*. It was about a planet where the humanoids ignored their most serious survival problems until



the last possible moment. And then, with all the forests being killed and all the lakes being poisoned by acid rain, and all the groundwater made unpotable by industrial waste and so on, the humanoids found themselves the parents of children with wings or antlers or fins, with a hundred eyes, with no eyes, with huge brains, with no brains, and on and on. These were Nature's experiments with creatures which might, as a matter of luck, be better planetary citizens than the humanoids. Most died, or had to be shot, or whatever, but a few were really quite promising, and they intermarried and had young like themselves. (623)

Immediately the perspective is move up in scale because the story is about "a planet" and the species who live there are "humanoids," not humans. However, from the description of life on this planet it is clear that the story is commenting on the reader's Earth. The beings that live on this planet are doing exactly what humans are doing on Earth, namely ignoring our "most serious survival problems until the last possible moment." In the narrator's summary he lists all the things that have happened because the humanoids ignored all the warnings signs of problems until the last minute, and by the last minute a lot of things are too late to fix. He says that the forests are "being killed" and the lakes are "being poisoned by acid rain" and the ground water is being ruined. The consequence of this, in the story, is that the humanoids have weirdly mutated children. Children with "wings or antlers or fins, with a hundred eyes, with no eyes" and with and without brains.

The only difference between Kilgore's *The Era of Hopeful Monsters* and the story the narrator is telling is that the mutations in Kilgore's story are rather extreme and they all come at the same time and are very different from each other. While the mutations that happens to the islanders happen over a million years of evolution, however, there is one mutation that happens quite suddenly in the very beginning. While Andrew MacIntosh, the rich financier, and Zenji Hiroguchi, the computer genius, dies before they get to the cruise ship, Zenji's pregnant wife Hisako makes it to the island and have her baby there. However, her baby is born with "a fine, silky pelt like a fur seal's" because Hisako's mother was exposed to radiation from an atomic bomb (Vonnegut 605). There might have been other mutations on the island that did not thrive in this environment and therefore did not survive further than a generation or two. Because the ones we see are the ones that happened to be the ones most suited to this environment. Kilgore's story in contrast, has a lot of these sudden mutations happening at the same time. And the children in Kilgore's story, as the narrator explains it, are "Nature's experiments with creatures which might, as a matter of luck, be better planetary citizens than the humanoids." Looking back to Hicks' explanation of how evolution is about

accidentally having the right traits to thrive in an environment, this story also works with this theory. Because the mutations that the children have might lead them to “be better planetary citizens,” in other words, these traits might make them survive better in the environment that the humanoids have created. Maybe some of the children happen to be able to handle the acid rain or drink the ruined ground water, making them better adapt to survive in this changed climate.

What is interesting here is how this story thinks about belonging and living on the planet. The humanoids are not being good planetary citizens because they have changed the environment so much by not changing their habits when the consequences, like acid rain, started happening. Kilgore’s solution is to create other versions of the humanoids with different mutations that might be better suited to live on the planet with the changes that have happened and without destroying it further. And back to Leon’s own narrative, where humans have smaller brains, they do show themselves to be better planetary citizens because they are finally adapted to living in this ecosystem sustainably. This prompts thinking about what it takes to be a good planetary citizen because it puts into perspective what it takes to think in terms of a planetary citizenship. By implying that the mutate creatures might be better planetary citizens, it is also saying that the humanoids, who are doing much that same as humans are doing, are not good planetary citizens. It thinks about what creatures are better at taking care of the planet and belonging as a citizen of this planet. It is a commentary on current humanity and how we are ignoring our own problems until the last minute. And it is a funny spin on what kinds of creatures might be better at taking care of the planet or what creatures might be better suited to live in the toxic environment that humans have created by polluting.

In contrast to this funny image that Kilgore Trout portrays in his novel, there is the idea of how one would act if one felt like they belonged somewhere. If one was a citizen of the planet, how would you be treating it if you had more of a feeling that you were actually belonged there as a part of it. But again, like Kilgore’s story, it focuses mostly on how not to behave. And just like humanoids the islanders ignored their most pressing problems of survival until the last possible moment. The narrative in *Galápagos* works to explain what needs to happen with humanity in terms of our thought process of how we belong on this planet. What it does with the islanders is that they first believe that they will be rescued any minute. They have no idea of how long they will be stuck on the island. Their original plan was to stock up on food on the island and then continue their journey, but then the cruise ship would not start again. But still they thought that someone would come and get them any

minute. However, it turns out that no one knows that they are there and completely forgets about them, the narrator explains:

When Mary Hepburn and the Captain and Hisako Hiroguchi and Selena MacIntosh and the rest of them were marooned on Santa Rosalia, they would not have a trained guide along. And, for their first few years there, they would raise perfect hell with the fragile habitat.

Just in the nick of time they realized that it was their own habitat they were wrecking – that they weren't merely visitors. (636)

Earlier the narrator explains that originally the cruise was supposed to have guides with them so that they would make sure not to ruin anything on their tour of the Galápagos islands. However, because the cruise got cancelled and was not supposed to set off, they had no such thing. Which is why they “for the first few years there, they would raise perfect hell with the fragile habitat.” At first, they assumed that they would be rescued at any minute, so it never crossed their minds to harvest food sustainably. They ate whatever they wanted, not thinking about eating too much of anything to make it go extinct on the island. And as it turns out, some species goes extinct because of their actions, however, by accident it did not have an impact on the ecosystem on the island, but the narrator makes it clear that it could have made an impact, it just happened not to (Vonnegut 764).

Eventually it seems that they realized that they are not going to be rescued and they have been forgotten about. Because the narrator explains that “Just in the nick of time they realized that it was their own habitat they were wrecking – that they weren't merely visitors.” They realize that this is their home now and they are now citizens or inhabitants of this island. Thinking about the island and their home and their habitat makes them be more careful about how they treat it. This is the way one should be thinking about the planet itself. Thinking about the planet as a habitat and home. One often speaks about animal habitat, but humans are also animals, and we also have a habitat, it just happens that the whole planet is the human habitat. And no animal destroys their own habitat because that is their food source and their shelter. And this is a way of thinking a good planetary citizen thinks about belonging on this planet. It is a way of thinking about nature and the planet that does not set humanity apart from it.

Comparing the islander's story to Kilgore's story of the humanoids gives an interesting view. Just like the humanoids, they were ignoring their problems of survival until the last possible minute. Narrators explains that they realized “in the nick of time”, in the last possible minute, that they are doing damage to their own habitat. And just like the humanoids,

at least one of the babies on the island had a sudden mutation that we get to see. One of the babies has fur.

In *Dispossessed*, what the narrative does is offer both a contemplation of the planet in a planetary perspective, yet it always works to bring the reader back down into the here and now. Grounding the narrative in place while also offering a larger perspective. While just offering the reader a larger perspective might make the theme at hand too metaphorical, thinking about the whole planet at once is hard and incomprehensible. Which is why it works so well for the narrative to either start in specifics of time and place and then work its way up in scale, or the other way around. After the hiking trip where Shevek and his partner is reintroduced in adult age, they move in with each other and Shevek discovers a lot of characteristics in Takver from watching her in her job as a marine biologist. Shevek explains about Takver that,

Her concern with landscapes and living creatures was passionate. This concern, feebly called “love of nature,” seemed to Shevek to be something much broader than love.

There are some souls, he thought, whose umbilicus has never been cut. They never got weaned from the universe. They do not understand death as an enemy; they look forward to rotting and turning into humus. It was strange to see Takver take a leaf into her hand, even a rock. She became an extension of it. (762)

Shevek talks about the souls “whose umbilicus has never been cut,” which paints a picture of someone who is still attached to what made them. Shevek talks about this in the context of Takver’s “love of nature” that goes way beyond just love. The way Shevek talks about it is like an attachment to nature. But Shevek brings it further than just nature, he explains what kind of souls this is and says, “They never got weaned from the universe.” Getting weaned from something meaning getting gradually to stop getting food from the mother. But here he talks about getting weaned from the universe. Gradually stop relating or feeling attached to the universe. Gradually separating yourself from the universe, not needing it anymore for nourishment or comfort. To never get weaned from the universe must mean that Takver never separated herself from the universe and from nature, meaning that she sees the total picture.

The bigger picture, maybe being a planetary perspective, or maybe even a universe perspective. However, imagining the universe feels to too big to comprehend, so by never weaning herself from the universe she never lost the sight of the bigger picture and how everything is interconnected. Takver’s ability to see the bigger picture is explained by Shevek when he says that she does not “understand death as an enemy” that she looks “forward to rotting and turning into humus.” It speaks of an acceptance of death as just another part of the

life cycle. It speaks of an understanding of how the ecosystem works and accepting that she as a human is part of this life cycle.

Then Shevek brings it back into place. Moving away from the planet and the universe, metaphysical things that might be hard to grasp. He explains how when Takver takes a leaf of a stone she becomes “an extension of it.” Because her soul was never weaned from the universe, she is still part of the universe and from watching her handle this leaf Shevek feels that she is not in any way separate from it. The universe here might be referring to nature, the environment, or every non-human made thing out there. To become an extension of a leaf, meaning that she does not see herself as separate from it. To Takver it is not humans versus the universe, she is part of the universe, never trying to separate herself from it. These people with a “love of nature” that goes beyond love. This might be what Morton is talking about with the ecological thought. These people have the ecological thought. It is seeping into every thought and into their soul.

Compared with Kilgore’s story about new creatures who might be better planetary citizens, Takver actually seems to be a good planetary citizen. Shevek observes her belonging to the universe and not being separate from the universe. Which the humanoids in Kilgore’s story seem to have separated themselves from the universe because they cannot be bothered to fix their problems before it is too late. And the islander’s in the narrator’s story forgot this in the beginning, but then adapted after many years, because they accepted that they were not going to be rescued. They have forgotten how the island is their habitat, while someone like Takver never saw herself as separate from nature. She understands that dying will mean decomposing back into the soil and therefore just being another part of nature, decomposing like everything else. While the islanders did not realize at first that the island they were getting food from needed to be taken care of properly and that they could not do whatever they wanted with it.

Both narratives think about citizenship and belonging, but in different ways. While *Galápagos* often shows how our current thinking and puts it into perspective. *Dispossessed* shows a character who very much already belongs to nature and has a deep feeling of belonging to it and therefore basing her actions on these feelings, which then makes her a planetary citizen. Maybe it is because she was never weaned from the universe, or maybe it has something to do with what and how they are taught in schools.

Further on, *Dispossessed* thinks about belonging, specifically not belonging having the relation to the environment as one should. In the past perspective on Anarres, the narrative gives a clue to where Shevek’s interest in how a world is supposed to look like and what

complex ecosystems are a part of a planet. It seems to be Shevek's partner Takver who planted the thoughts of a more complex ecosystem and being part of a global environment. Taker shows a unique ability to think much further than the local environment on Anarres and reflects upon what would be different if they could live in a more complex and biodiverse ecosystem. She explains to Shevek that

“We Anarresti are unnaturally isolated. On the Old World there are eighteen phyla of land animals; there are classes, like the insects, that have so many species they've never been able to count them, and some of those species have populations of billions. Think if it: everywhere you looked animals, other creatures, sharing the earth and the air with you. You'd feel so much more a part.” (763)

Taker shows an ability to think in planetary terms, imagining an existence with a biodiverse planet. She is a marine biologist, meaning that she probably has a greater understanding than most about how it might be like to live in a complex ecosystem. Though there are barely any life on land, the ocean life on Anarres has evolved similarly to our own oceans, with a great biodiversity of both fish and plant life (Le Guin 763). Before this quote she comments on how she really likes marine biology and the reason for liking it so much is because of its complexity and how the ocean life is “a real web” (Le Guin 763). There is no “web” on land, there are mostly just humans. However, as she spends her days among the complex aquatic life, she has plenty of opportunity to reflect upon what it might be like to life among such a complex ecosystem, knowing that Urras has a complex ecosystem on land. Takver explains how the inhabitants on Anarres are “unnaturally isolated,” not from people, but from other species to interact with. She explains that on “the Old World,” meaning Urras where their people came from seven generations ago, they live among “eighteen phyla of land animals.” Seeing how the fish live among other species of fish, she reflects upon how life would be like among this phyla of land animals on Urras.

She asks Shevek to join her in her thinking saying, “think of it,” and then imagines what it would be like to live in a world with biodiverse land creatures and walking among them, saying “everywhere you looked animals.” She has been thinking a lot about this and possibly does some reading about the biodiversity on Urras and she thinks in planetary terms when she considers what it might be like to walk around and see animals everywhere and everyone being a part of a global ecosystem. What is interesting is that she is not considering how these animals might become important resources for their survival on Anarres, but instead just thinks about living among them, she imagines “sharing the earth and the air.” On Urras, on the other side, the animals seem to be viewed as resources, as something that is

valuable only to the extent they can be used, putting prices on now protected animal species (Le Guin 720). Takver shows the ability to think in Heise's planetary terms, her awareness of a missing complex ecosystem on land, makes her question what it would be like to live on a planet, like Urras, with a diverse set of creatures. And the language she uses is that of sharing the earth. She imagines that they would feel "much more a *part*." She reflects upon a greater existence and maybe a feeling of completeness if only they lived among more animals. Seeing birds in the sky and other animals walking the same ground as them. She longs for being a part of a global ecology, one where they would share the air and earth where they all contribute to the planetary complexity of life. For someone who has never experienced such an ecosystem, other than what she observes in the oceans, she shows an impressive ability to think in planetary terms and how such a complex existence might add to their unnatural isolation on Anarres.

This happening in the past, and then looking at the scene mentioned earlier where Shevek is looking out the window and reflecting on how a world is actually supposed to look. One gets a clearer idea of where his thoughts of what a world is supposed to look like is coming from. Because they are living together, we can assume that this is just one of many conversations of nature, ecology, and belonging they have had. Maybe this was the first one, the one that really stood out to Shevek, because it was here that he really got his eyes up to thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. This might have been the start of his own reflections of what a world is supposed to look like. A little like Morton's the ecological thought, that once he started thinking about this and Takver opened his eyes to this perspective, he could not stop thinking in these terms. Takver opened his mind up, and he became radically open to these thoughts. Then, when he came to Urras and was seeing all the biodiversity that Takver had been talking about for a long time, maybe he finally understood the importance of the biodiversity that Takver discusses. While Takver works with fish and probably has a good understanding how such a diverse system works, Shevek got to walk among this on Urras and properly see the biodiversity that Takver is talking about.

This feeling of belonging only takes one so far, there also needs to be a feeling of citizenship that will prompt people to act. When this citizenship is connected to the whole planet, then people will act to protect the whole planet and people on the whole planet. In *Dispossessed*, people on Anarres are citizens of the whole planet, and therefore acts accordingly. Part of having a sense of planet, as Heise explains, is looking at the planet beyond the borders of nations and cities territory, this is present on Anarres. Though there are no countries on the planet, there are cities and smaller towns people might identify with and

see themselves as citizens of, however, when the planet is struggling with famine, everyone helps wherever it is needed. No one seems to be thinking that there is no need to help because they themselves are not as affected by the food shortage in their own city. In the past perspective on Anarres, the narrator explains that Shevek “took on a volunteer posting, construction work on a new water-recycling plant in South Abbenay” (806). Though Shevek is a physicist, he does not hesitate to take volunteer postings when disaster strikes. He puts his own career and life on hold to help wherever it is needed. And he was not the only one, the narrator explains that “[t]he population of the city had visibly thinned, as several thousands had volunteered or been posted to emergency farm work” (811). Further, when Shevek receives a posting for work he is sad because of how far away from his family, the narrator explains “[h]e had hoped for something close to Abbenay, not clear around in Southrising” (812), but despite his sadness he takes the job. Though the PDC, the administration, coordinate the work, they have no power to force anyone to work and every citizen are free to refuse to take a posting. Further, his partner gets a posting in “Northeast, for an indeterminable period” (818), she decides to leave even though it is inconvenient and Shevek is not yet back from his posting somewhere else.

In the beginning of *Dispossessed*, there is a map of both Anarres and Urras, where it shows where the cities are, mountains and oceans (Le Guin 616-617). A look at the map of Anarres and you see how the planet is not divided into any countries or anything. The only thing it differentiates is land and ocean. What one sees on the map is that all the places that Shevek and Takver are posted to is far away from each other. But they have no connection to a certain area of land that they call themselves citizen of, rather they seem to help out because they think of themselves as inhabitants or citizens of the planet and problems that affect other inhabitants of the planet also affects them, so they take postings all over the planet. The willingness of the inhabitants to take postings wherever and not just the ones near the city or town they live in shows that this is a planet where the inhabitants consider themselves citizens of the planet. It shows a “world environmental citizenship” or “planetary citizenship” as Vonnegut would say.

There is a sense that the whole planet is their home, and they therefore do what has to be done to save it. While the islanders needed time to realize that the island was their home and that they were in the process of destroying the ecosystem on the island. While on Anarres people have been brought up without borders or obligations to areas or cities or anything, and therefore when catastrophe comes and there is a famine, everyone helps out. While there is a famine in *Galápagos* and the narrator explains that there is indeed enough food for everyone,



the whole planet does not step in to help redistribute the food (Vonnegut 579). There is a sense of their citizenship is tied to their country, and what happens everywhere else on the planet does not concern them as long as it does not affect them. However, what one learns if one thinks in terms of a planetary citizenship is that everything is interconnected, and it does concern them. Because, as the islanders learned, it was their own habitat they were destroying. Something the Anarresti clearly have learned and most of them do not have to think twice about helping out on the other side of the planet, even if they are separated from their partner, or if this is not really their kind of work. While Kilgore's story was looking for better planetary citizens, the Anarresti really do see themselves as citizens of the planet and take on the responsibility that this requires.

### **3.4 Thinking in terms of a Planetary Citizenship**

In this final subsection, I will be discussing other ideas that relate to thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship. In the previous subsections I have divided up the term, first focusing on the planetary, then focusing on citizenship and belonging. However, thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is not as easy as just putting these two together. Being a planetary citizen also means thinking about, or at least being open to thinking about, all aspects of the environment and how humans affect and change the environment. Like Morton explains about the ecological thought, it means thinking about the totality. It means going beyond just the surface level and going deeper into all aspect of environmental thinking. Understanding that everything is interconnected, and environmental thinking is more than just thinking about the environment, as in nature.

To demonstrate how not to be a planetary citizen, *Galápagos* presents the reader with a character who is everything we should not strive to be. Being a planetary citizen goes much deeper than just thinking nature should be preserved and talking about how to save the environment. An example of someone who presents themselves as a planetary citizen but clearly is not one is Andrew MacIntosh, the rich financier. He shows off his knowledge of why one should conserve the Galápagos islands and what happens if you do no. However, the narrator explains that these thoughts do no go that deep. Leon says that,

It is a joke to me that this man should have presented himself as an ardent conservationist, since so many of the companies he served as a director or in which he was a major stockholder were notorious damagers of the water or the soil or the atmosphere. (637)

Though Andrew talks about the importance of conservation, he is a director or stockholder of companies who “were notorious damagers of the water or the soil or the atmosphere.” In other

words, while his words are the correct ones, his actions do not reflect what he is saying. While there is a possibility that he does not know that these companies have been polluting, thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship means making sure that the companies they are connected to not only is not harming the environment. Because, like Morton's the ecological thought, thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is something that once you start doing it and start thinking about the planet, there is no going back. This line also highlights the importance of being aware of what companies are doing, because you can talk all you want about conservation, but if you are investing in or a director of companies who are harming the environment, then you are supporting this work. It is thinking about what is going on behind the scenes. Because if you are like Andrew and just talking about conservation, but behind the scenes supporting the opposite, then you are doing nothing at all.

Being able to think with a planetary perspective is an important aspect of a planetary citizenship. Understanding how natural processes all are connected and then making decisions based on this understanding. In *Dispossessed*, a theme is how alienated humanity have become from their waste. The narrative explores this theme by presenting the reader with our own habits relating to waste from an outsider's perspective. A big part of the ideology on Anarres is their attitudes towards excess. The founder philosopher Leia Odo's ideology teaches the inhabitants of Anarres that anything beyond the mere essentials is excess, is wasteful, and should be avoided. They therefore live a simple life on Anarres, with almost nothing more than what they need to survive. The narrative does two things with this ideology. First it alienates our own attitudes to waste by seeing Shevek react to things that seem normal to the reader. It also works as an example of thoughts we should be thinking and not taking so lightly on waste and throwing things away. Already on the way over to Urras in the first chapter is Shevek witnessing Urras' habits and ideas about waste and what is valuable. Shevek's clothing was taken away to be washed, and when he gets it back it is wrapped in paper. The doctor who takes care of Shevek on the spaceship throws away the paper and Shevek asks:

“What happens to the paper?”

“The paper?”

“The green paper.”

“Oh, I put it in the trash.”

“Trash?”

“Disposal. It gets burned up.”

“You burn paper?”

“Perhaps it just gets dropped out into space, I don’t know.” (627-628)

In this short exchange Shevek asks a simple question about what happens to the paper, a question the reader might not have thought to ask, but since Shevek is thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship, he cannot help but notice these things. The doctor seems confused by the question at first and needs clarification on what it is Shevek is asking about, the doctor replies with “The paper?”, not sure what Shevek is actually asking. When Shevek clarifies that it is the green paper, the doctor starts by replying “Oh,” as he finally understands what Shevek is referring to, but he is surprised by the question. The doctor explains simply that he put it in the “trash.” However, now it is Shevek who needs clarification not being familiar with what trash is, he asks “Trash?” Not quite understanding what the doctor is referring to because on Anarres there is no trash. The doctor then uses another word for trash, “disposal” and explains that it gets burned up. Shevek is confused by this act and asks further if it is true that they burn paper. Later in the narrative in the past perspective on Anarres, the reader learns that paper is a valuable resource (Le Guin 642). The doctor answers “perhaps,” because as it turns out he does not quite know what happens to the trash. He mentions just off hand that it might be “dropped out into space,” but he does not know. Shevek’s interest in what happens to the paper that was only used to wrap is clothing and the doctor’s uninterest in what happens to it are both very revealing. What the narrative does is to alienate the reader from a practice that is normal for them and making them look at it from another perspective. It is not until later in the novel that the reader really learns why Shevek is so confused by the burning of paper. It turns out that there is no such thing as “trash” on Anarres, everything that needs to be disposed of is always put into “the recycle bin” (744).

Further on, not long after this exchange, the reader also learn that it is not only trash that is burned or thrown into space, so is clothing that has no value. While waiting for his own clothes to be washed, he wears some pyjamas, however, these are thrown away after he gets his own clothes back. So Shevek asks,

“The clothes are burned?”

“Oh, those are cheap pajamas, service issue – wear ‘em and throw ‘em away, it costs less than cleaning.”

“It costs less,” Shevek repeated meditatively. He said the words the way a paleontologist looks at a fossil, the fossil that dates the whole stratum. (628).

Shevek asks again a simple question, he asks if the clothes have the same fate as the paper. The doctor taking this for granted seems to be yet again startled by his question and starts his answer with “Oh,” not expecting that he had to explain why the clothes are burned or thrown

away. The doctor then as a way of explaining says that “those are cheap pajamas”, as if that is answer enough and it probably would have been to someone from Urras. Simply pointing to the low value of the clothing as an object is reason enough for it to be thrown away. Then, possibly seeing Shevek’s confusion, he explains further that burning them “costs less than cleaning.” Again, justifying an action by pointing to its value. Another act the reader might recognize, how the act of preserving something costs more than just getting rid of it. However, the narrative presents this information from Shevek’s perspective, an alien from another planet where everything is recycled. And the reader therefore picks up on the strangeness of this statement. What the narrative does in these two examples is to alienate the reader from their own peoples habits and presenting them from an outsider’s perspective who does not take these habits for granted. From the beginning of the novel the reader gets an idea of what Shevek’s planet looks upon as wasteful.

This scene occurs in the first chapter of the novel. Before we learn about the ideology of excess on Anarres. Right in the beginning, the narrative presents Shevek as someone who is asking the questions that the reader might not even think to ask. The usual thought process is just that waste goes away. The narrative early on establishes itself as an outside perspective on all the habits and thoughts that are too ingrained in our own thinking. But, when Shevek asks these questions, it prompts the reader to also think about these issues, because the trash do not just disappear once it is out of sight. This is similar to Morton’s the ecological thought in that he prompts the reader to think about where the toilet waste goes. And this is exactly what Shevek also does, as mentioned earlier when he goes around his room on Urras he does think about where the toilet waste goes. Not knowing the answer to these types of questions demonstrates how separate one might be from the ecosystem, which makes it hard to see the totality. If one is trying to save the planet by planting trees, but you keep producing a lot of trash and do not know where it ends up, then there is a disconnect there. Just like MacIntosh in *Galápagos* who talks about saving the environment but is not following up on his words. Interestingly, it is not until later in the narrative when the reader fully understand what life is like on Anarres that it makes sense where Shevek’s questions are coming from.

Further on in *Dispossessed*, there is not only themes relating to what happens to waste, but also wastefulness and using an unnecessary amount of resources. Here Urras’ and Anarres’ approach to wasting natural resources differ. While Anarres makes sure every resource is not wasted at all and everything is used sustainably, Urras has taken another approach that might be more relatable and realistic to the reader. When Shevek first arrives on Urras, the narrator explains that Urras has learned from a millennium of excess use of natural

resources to now use them more sustainably. But this does not mean that they are trying to use everything sustainably. As mentioned, they burn paper and clothes because it costs less than recycling. There is also a possibility that the resources used to make these items are not in short supply, and it is not prioritised for saving. While Shevek is on Urras he learns about Urras' actions against the draining of valuable natural resources. The narrator explains that

[Shevek] was driven out into the country in hired cars... There were not many of them on the roads: the hire was expensive, and few people owned a car privately, because they were heavily taxed. All such luxuries which if freely allowed to the public would tend to drain irreplaceable natural resources or to foul the environment with waste products were strictly controlled by regulation and taxation. His guides dwelt on this with some pride. A-Io had led the world for centuries, they said, in ecological control and the husbanding of natural resources. The excesses of the Ninth Millennium were ancient history, their only lasting effect being the shortage of certain metals, which fortunately could be imported from the Moon. (681)

What is interesting here is that Urras is the planet that reminds the reader most of our own planet. The narrator explains that there are not many cars on the roads, because "the hire was expensive" and that few people have their own cars because "they were heavily taxed." The narrative calls them "luxuries." They are not allowed to be used freely by the public because they tend to "drain irreplaceable natural resources" and "foul the environment with waste products." Both are arguments for limiting the use of cars in the real world. The narrator's explanation of their car use and other such luxuries highlight what Urras thinks is wasteful. They have learned their lesson of using irreplaceable natural resources. It seems that in the past during "the excesses of the Ninth Millennium" they used too much of some natural resources and we learn that the only lasting effect is "shortage of certain metals." Urras therefore think it is wasteful to drain natural resources and to "foul the environment with waste products." Further on the narrator explains that A-Io, the state Shevek is visiting on Urras, "led the world for centuries, they said, in ecological control and the husbanding of natural resources." What is interesting here is the "they said," the narrator does not seem to actually know if this is true, so it leans on the guides for this information. And because they are showing Shevek their beautiful state, it is likely that they want to impress him and might be either lying or overexaggerating. However, they do not go as far as ban cars altogether, putting taxes on it seems to be enough to reduce that car use, but A-Io does not think it is necessary to remove it completely.

Further on, thinking the ecological thought and therefore planetary citizenship also involves thinking about what is waste in relation to value. Shevek, towards the end of the novel when he is sick of feeling like no one is listening to what he is saying, so Shevek reflects that,

“...I have only seen the outside of the city – the wrapping of the package.” He used the phrase because he had been fascinated from the start by the Urrasti habit of wrapping everything up in clean, fancy paper or plastic or cardboard or foil. Laundry, books, vegetables, clothes, medicines, everything came inside layers and layers of wrapping. Even packets of paper were wrapped in several layers of paper. Nothing was to touch anything else. He had begun to feel that he, too, had been carefully packaged. (773).

This is interesting because Shevek has taken a concept he is not familiar with, the wrapping of objects for protect them, and uses it to explain a feeling he is having. “The wrapping of the package,” is a concept that does not exist on Anarres, so this shows how attentive he has been while on this foreign planet. The narrator explains that this phrase fascinated him, because of how Urrasti wrapped everything. The wrapping is there to protect something of value, which symbolise how Shevek has been treated. He has been treated as something of value, because the government wants something from him, and he is therefore to be kept at a safe distance from everything else. Shevek’s observation of the frequent use of wrapping points out that while Urras is careful with some natural resources, they are not rejecting all excessive use like Anarres is.

Thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship also means considering what is valuable. On Urras it seems like the only thing that have any value are material things. When Shevek is in the shopping district looking for some new clothes, because he only came with one outfit, Shevek spots a fur jacket and someone says to him, “Oh, yes, that’s real fur, quite rare now that the animals are protected” (Le Guin 720). Looking at the cost of these things reveal that it costs more than an average citizen makes in a year (Le Guin 720). It is valuable because it is rare and there are few of them now. “now that the animals are protected” reveal that they have not always been protected. Maybe this was also during the millennium of excess talked about earlier. Towards the end of *Dispossessed*, when Shevek runs away from the government on Urras, the narrator observes that “There were no parks in downtown Nio, the land was far too valuable to waste on amenity” (781). This reveals a lot about the A-Io government and how it evaluates the worth of places and objects. There “were no parks,” no places put aside for nature and animals to live. No places for people to get a break from city life to enjoy the

greenery because “the land was far too valuable.” And parks are not valuable enough to be put on land in this area. However, as someone who thinks in terms of a planetary citizenship, this is something Shevek thinks about when he is looking around, because for him nothing could be more valuable than nature.

Thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is something that requires work because it means thinking about all aspects of life on the planet, both the human and the non-human. However, just like a utopia, a planetary citizenship is not something that one might achieve, but rather something to work towards. Because it is a way of thinking that needs to remain open and not become a closed off idea of the perfect state of being. Just as Mathisen explains about Anarres’ utopia, it has become an intolerable place, because its idea of utopia is fixed, and they are refusing to change and think in new ways. What one would consider a planetary citizenship today might change later as science and technology evolves, and maybe what is considered a sustainable practise might also change. So, it is important to remain open, radically open as Morton puts it, because thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is something to be working towards. In this chapter I have shown how thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship is presented in *Galápagos* and *Dispossessed*. Both in the narrative being planetary in scale, but also in how it prompts the reader to reconsider what it means to be a citizen and to belong somewhere. It requires thinking about all aspects of life that one might not have given thought before, like what is considered waste and how does one determine value. In the end, what remains most important is how humanity thinks about themselves in relation to all other life on the planet and that the non-human needs are just as important as the human ones.

## Conclusion

In the end, I hope that the idea of thinking in terms of a planetary citizenship can be a great addition to analysing environmental literature and science fiction. Showing that science fiction can offer valuable perspectives on climate change and other environmental issues. Looking at narratives in terms of a planetary citizenship allows for a careful examination of how the narrative works to prompt readers to think about citizenship and belonging to the planet in a new way. While it builds on Heise's eco-cosmopolitanism, it also incorporates more philosophical thinking in terms of Morton's ecological thought, showing how it requires a new way of thinking about how one is part of a larger planetary ecosystem, it also shows a need to change how one thinks. While it prompts the reader to think in terms of what the narrative scope itself is, it also prompts the reader to consider themselves and their place on the planet. A planetary citizenship requires re-defining one's conception of citizenship and to consider what it means to belong.

Vonnegut and Le Guin's narratives are prompting the reader to think in terms of a planetary citizenship. While Vonnegut's *Galápagos* lean more on the planetary perspective side of a planetary citizenship, Le Guin's *Dispossessed* offer more insights into what it means to be a citizen in her portrayal of the anarchist society on Anarres. In this thesis I have been framing Vonnegut and Le Guin as environmental thinkers and looked at how the the narratives work to prompt the reader to think in a planetary perspective and prompt them to re-consider their idea of what it means to be a citizen and what it means to belong.

However, as mentioned, a planetary citizenship is not some kind of status one can achieve. I want to suggest that a planetary citizenship is something one should keep striving towards. Just like in *Dispossessed*'s Anarres' ambiguous utopia, while it is not a perfect utopia, after Shevek points out how they built walls of conventional behaviour and that they had stopped evolving, they once again started striving towards a utopia. But, the definition of utopia might evolve and change, and they have to keep evolving with it and keep striving towards it. It is the same with a planetary citizenship. It is an idea that might evolve over the next several years as technology evolve and our understanding of how to help the planet evolves. But it is something that should be attempting to strive towards, both as individuals and as citizens of the planet. In the end, we will always be a citizen of the country we live in. However, in considering how to make people understand why climate change affects everyone, it might be helpful to imagine that how one might be a citizen of the planet first and foremost because without the planet there would be no country to be a citizen of. In other



words, maybe one should consider oneself as a dual citizen. A country without the planet is not possible, however, the planet without countries is a unrealistic goal.

I would like to see more research on Le Guin's environmental thinking. During my research I found there to be more room for exploring Le Guin's work in an ecocritical context. Many have mentioned environmental aspects of many of her novels, but I think there should be done something similar to what Jarvis did with Vonnegut's work, creating an overview over all her work and explore the environmental thinking throughout her career. In addition, I think there is room to revisit Vonnegut's work in an environmental context, as has been done in recent years by both Jarvis and Hicks. In general, it is important that the literary research reflects the interests and concerns of our times and doing more ecocritical readings is more important now than ever to help talk about climate change and help reconceptualise how humanity thinks about their place within the planetary ecosystem.

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