

Title:

A View of Ecology in Utopian Works: The Traditional Elements of English Utopian Literature

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Summary

This study focused on the theme of ecology in English utopian literature while its purpose was to elucidate how the concept of ecology functioned in such literature. In terms of research method, this paper took up one work from the sixteenth century onward and analyzed the literary techniques of each, in particular 'narrative' structure, in order to consider what kind of ecological interpretations could be gleaned from each. Utopian works are characterized by the author's indirect criticism of society, and have the function of attempting to improve society by presenting ideals and criticizing reality. Therefore, it was essential to clarify the structure of presenting ideals and criticizing reality in each work in order to investigate their ecological elements.

The first chapter examined Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), which has become an indispensable model for later utopian writers. During discussion of its frame story, we hypothesized that by utilizing two narrators the author More superimposed his own ideal values via the inner frame narrator Hythlodæus, while the outer narrator More held values that conflicted with these. Examining the text based on this hypothesis, we found that the book adopted the agriculture-first principle and common ownership as components of a utopian society, which emphasized an agricultural lifestyle and a sense of value that sought spiritual pleasure. Such escape from a materialist world by means of the common ownership system supported a sustainable utopian society in terms of ecology. The book was complex in structure: ecologically ideal institutions were presented by an inner narrator, while an outer narrator – posing as the author himself – refuted such systems. In the sixteenth century, long before the Industrial Revolution, the book had already envisioned an environmentally friendly social system. Consequently, an emphasis on country settings and spiritual pleasure could be regarded as a central impetus for the ecological view of this work.

The second chapter focused on William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610-11), which is often treated as the author's unique utopian literary work. With an analysis of the lines of the protagonist and director Prospero, along with supporting character

Gonzalo, it was discovered that the two held opposite values. Presentation of an ideal world and a critique of reality were carried out through these two characters, respectively. Then we suggested that while a primitive natural life before the advent of civilization as extolled by Gonzalo was idealized, the artificial paradise as conceived by Prospero was presented as a counterpoint to that ideal. It seemed that this drama was satirizing Prospero's tendency of dominating others and nature as representative of a modern technological utopia, while at the same time presenting an alternative pre-modern ecological utopia – represented by Gonzalo– as an ideal. Therefore, we regarded it as the ecological view in this work that rather than the modern view of nature that separates humans from nature, the pre-modern one, which regards humans as a part of nature, was being idealized.

The third chapter critically surveyed Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), which created a new form of anti-utopia within the tradition of utopian literature. The work takes the form of a first-person adventure novel. It was revealed that there were three perspectives: Gulliver before his ideological and spiritual growth, Gulliver after his growth, and Gulliver as the narrator. It was further determined that these three perspectives were utilized to indicate a utopian view of the nation in the story via satire. It became apparent that the landscape in harmony with nature contrasted with the artificially developed land in Lilliput, the fertile land based on agriculture in Brobdingnag, the old-fashioned farm that uniquely existed in Balnibarbi, and the simple life assimilated with nature in Houyhnhnms were presented as ideals. Then we concluded that landscape in harmony with nature as with the old-fashioned farms once seen in Ireland, as well as a simple lifestyle assimilated with nature and not reliant on technology, was ultimately the view of ecology put forward in this work.

The fourth chapter analyzed William Morris's *News from Nowhere* (1890), which can be said to be clearly representative of environmental issues and consciousness as found within utopian literature. It was discovered that the complex narrative technique of the triple narrator was utilized in this work. This worked to create ambiguity in this multivalent set of entities and to weave multiple perspectives into the characterization of each figure. The viewpoint of the protagonist Guest included not only that of himself, but also that of the author Morris and other people who borrowed the form of the narrator 'P'. Therefore, each character narrated by Guest contained a description from varying perspectives, while the characters themselves became the figures who fully reflected Morris's ideals. Consequently, the young Dick was interpreted as guiding the reader to the future society, the old Hammond embodied Communist ideology, and the fascinating lady Ellen represented ecological thought. In addition, the main character

Guest consisted of two sides: one an immature socialist, the other an accomplished Communist. This work successfully presented the notions of Communism, utopia, and ecology in a single, unified, vision by means of such characters. We understood that in such a vision, Communism and ecology were not contradictory, but were presented as interdependent concepts.

The fifth chapter discussed Aldous Huxley's *Island* (1962), which is permeated throughout with ecological themes. In this work the theme of ecology was foregrounded by plotting the ideological and spiritual growth of the protagonist, Will Farnaby. This was achieved by means of the text's adoption of the novelistic form, 'Bildungsroman,' and the narrative technique, 'stream-of-consciousness.' In addition, the contradictory elements of eugenics and mysticism in the work forced the reader to consider the pros and cons of how to realize an ecological society. As a result, the work faithfully followed the tradition of utopian literature, which is characterized by a tendency of posing questions to the reader. Furthermore, by using the element of satire to critique hypocritical Christian thought and Western consumerist society, their diametrical opposites – Buddhist philosophy and de-consumerism – were idealized. We therefore found that this work ultimately asserted an ecological vision that idealized a de-consumerist lifestyle and a Zen-like simplicity.

The sixth chapter assessed Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), which is often understood as a dystopian novel that warns against over-developed medical technology. It was revealed that the protagonist and narrator, Kathy, was given the role of hiding the dystopian nature of the boarding school where the clones grew up while at the same time relating the story in an idyllic and nostalgic way. A criticism of consumerism that made even clones disposable was also embedded in the narrator's monologue. A further critique highlighted the folly of humans trapped in the illusion of a strictly peaceful use of nuclear energy. The bleak landscape of the protagonist's last stop was analogous to the ruins of Nagasaki after the atomic bombing. There was no explicit mention of nuclear power plants or nuclear fuel processing facilities in the work, although a reader was able to intuit traces of them in the narrative of reticent Kathy. We regarded the ecological viewpoint in this work to be a society in which people aspire to and idealize analogue technologies of a slightly earlier time and clean energy.

In the concluding section, after summarizing the presentation of ideals and criticism of reality in terms of ecology for each work, we followed this with a discussion of their ecological elements as common denominator. Locating common ground amongst all of the six works centers on a social system which values agriculture-oriented rural life and a simple lifestyle in which the emphasis is on spiritual pleasure. As in More's

Utopia, all of the works under discussion show such values, albeit in varying degrees and forms. Also, what is shown in stark contrast to such values is the modern, rationalized, commercialistic social system represented by the city, and the materialistic and consumerist lifestyles driven by material greed and private ownership. Conversely, the spiritual pleasure presented in *Utopia* is a sense of fulfillment that arises from the awareness of having intellectual aspirations and pursuing a moderate lifestyle, or what Marius de Geus calls “utopia of sufficiency.” Ultimately, then, ‘sufficiency of mind’ rather than materialistic ‘sufficiency of goods’ is the measure of happiness. This mode of thinking is the ideology that sustains the ecological utopian society depicted by More.

This ideology of ‘sufficiency of mind’ has been inherited by later utopian writers, and is embedded in their respective works as an element constituting their utopian society. In *The Tempest*, this ideology is represented by Gonzalo, and in *Gulliver’s Travels*, it permeates the land of the giants and that of the horses. In *News from Nowhere*, the main character Guest learns this ideology from the future residents, while in *Island*, the main character Will acquires it through life with Pala residents. In *Never Let Me Go*, such ideology can be read in contrast to the ruthless human society described by the main character Kathy. The concept of ‘sufficiency of mind,’ which is the exact opposite of the values of a consumerist society that triggers environmental destruction, can be regarded, therefore, as an essential element of ecological utopia.

It can be said that the concept of ecology was not added later to utopian literary works but was included as a component from the time More wrote *Utopia* and inaugurated utopian literature. If we try to envision a sustainable society as depicted in a utopian literary work, it will inevitably contain elements of ecology. That is to say, the concept of ecology has become an important component within the tradition of English utopian literature.