

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN AND NATURE IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This article provides an overview of how humanity's relationship with nature has been depicted within seminal English literature over the past millennium. Tracing an attitudinal transition from initial anthropocentric assumptions of righteous human dominion over natural resources towards more recent identification of intrinsic environmental value beyond mere utility. It examines major texts through an ecocritical methodology, analyzing symbolic content and thematic motifs concerning the conceptualized bond between mankind and external ecology across changing cultural paradigms alongside developments in ethical philosophy and evolutionary science.

Keywords: relationship between human and nature, English literature, ecocriticism, environmental ethics, ecological philosophy

The relationship between human beings and nature is a prevalent theme across English literature. From early Anglo-Saxon poetry to modern dystopian fiction, the interconnection between mankind and the natural environment provides compelling insights into the human condition (Vahobov, 2010: 35-37; Aliev, 2015: 152). This article analyses literary depictions of this complex bond through seminal English texts spanning over a thousand years.

Applying an interdisciplinary approach combining literary analysis and environmental ethics, it specifically examines how the conceptualization of the human-nature relationship evolved within English literature according to varying philosophical paradigms across different historical eras (Rahmonov, 2013) - from an initial exploitative orientation to more recent notions of symbiotic harmony. Literature acts as a rich repository charting our changing attitudes towards the natural world (Xashimov, 2009: 41).

Tracing this attitudinal shift chronologically by exploring seminal texts, analysis suggests English literature progressively adopts a more ecocentric perspective, seeing intrinsic value within nature independent of human utility. However, counter-narratives persist, viewing environmental domination as mankind's ordained purpose. Oscillating perspectives still remain between constructivist postmodern notions rejecting innate meaning within nature, and scientific realist outlooks grounding inherent natural value through empirical ecology (Saidov, 2019: 87-95).

Texts were selected based on their epochal influence upon English literature's conceptualization of humanity's relationship with nature. Seminal works strongly impacting cultural attitudes or

embodying the environmental zeitgeist of their age were chosen as subjects of analysis (Kayumov, 2010: 13-19).

The key analysis methodology combines principles of ecocriticism and ethical literary criticism to examine moral dimensions within textual depictions of interactions between human beings and nature.

Assumptions are made regarding authors' intended portrayal of environmental ethics and mankind's proper orientation towards nature based upon holistic textual analysis of symbolism, diction and thematic elements. Allegorical and metaphorical levels of meaning are also examined to derive latent perspectives supplemental to surface interpretations.

Anglo-Saxon texts display an instrumental view of nature, valuing environmental elements primarily regarding human utility. This anthropocentric perspective is shown through descriptively embodied metaphors within seminal poems *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* depicting nature's sublime power and indifference towards human struggles (Raxmatullaev, 2005: 117-121).

Mankind holds a hostile relationship with the perilous sea voyage serving as an allegory for the tragic hero's exile and vain earthly exertions, with candid analogies drawn between aging bodies and decaying country manors. Natural world thus provides a mirror for examining human mortality.

The Elizabethan era sees an early ethical critique of anthropocentric environmental exploitation emerge within Shakespearean drama *As You Like It*, delivered through the forest exile of its human protagonists. Satirical contrasts are made between the dishonest, grasping values of cynical court and the egalitarian pastoral utopia embodied by the forest's intrinsic purity (Inoyatov, 2015: 45-55).

Yet the play's quasi-mystical finale relies upon magical interventions from anthropomorphised forest spirits, subordinating environmental redemption to human terms rather than innate natural processes. Ambivalence hence persists regarding nature's autonomous purpose.

Romantic poetry venerates nature's sublime beauty and fully conceives intrinsic value and meaning within organic environmental forms independent of mankind. This marks a revolutionary departure from instrumentalist perspectives.

Seminal works like Wordsworth's 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey' and Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' deploy rich natural imagery with dynamic emotive resonance along animistic lines to capture innately spiritual qualities (Pulatova, 2019: 61-68).

However, contrasting works by second-generation Romantics like Byron maintain more objectified, aestheticized approaches limiting intrinsic natural meaning. Dissonance therefore continues between competing orientations.

The Victorian era witnesses the full emergence of ecology as empirical science, with Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories capturing interdependence between organisms within interconnected natural systems. Natural equilibrium is thus conditional upon complex environmental relationships rather than innate purpose.

Thomas Hardy's regional novels like 'The Return of the Native' examine conflicts arising between human and natural worlds within rapidly industrialising rural landscapes, displaying ambivalence regarding modernity's expanding dominion over once 'unspoiled' idyllic scenery

through encroaching urbanization and mechanized agriculture (Murodov, 2017) - indicating uncertainty over mankind's proper relationship with nature despite its apparent ascendancy. Modernist masterworks showcase Fragmented human subjectivities through nonlinear narratives resisting integral meaning as industrialization and urbanization corrode old pastoral certainties.

The moral cataclysm and disillusionment of the First World War also fundamentally destabilises inherited humanist perspectives of harmonious natural order, with T.S. Eliot's seminal poem 'The Waste Land' capturing the resulting cultural despair through bleak symbolic landscapes of arid sterility and pollution signalling humanity's moral collapse.

Shattered perspectives eschew the possibility of invoking wider natural harmony, with only the fractured private consciousness remaining as a valid concern within atomized technocratic society (Karimov, 2013)

Margaret Atwood's 'Oryx and Crake' exemplifies contemporary literature repeated deploying catastrophic narrative scenarios exploring potential societal outcomes should technology-facilitated human hubris choose to comprehensively dominate natural environs, willfully engineering new synthetic species while recklessly damaging delicate ecological balance through unethical bioengineering experiments serving corporate profits.

The text plays out the moral warning from Mary Shelley's foundational science fiction work Frankenstein regarding science unrestrained by cautious responsibility. Yet Atwood also tentatively advocates for a sustainable future relationship with nature through the redemptive coda of her human protagonist and his adopted new species suggestively starting afresh.

Analysis indicates literary conceptualizations of humanity's ideal relationship with the natural environment transitioned across changing cultural paradigms over time alongside transforming philosophical perspectives, from initial assumptions of mankind's ordained ascendancy towards more recent arguments for intrinsic environmental value. This corresponds with shifts between prevailingly anthropocentric and emerging ecocentric schools of thought across ethical philosophy and ecological science.

Early instrumentalist orientations gave way to first stirrings of doubt regarding voracious resource exploitation, building towards Romantic identification of spiritual meaning inside organic nature beyond human determination. But rapid industrialisation destabilised these new certainties by subjugating rural ecology to urban production, before 20th century technological proliferation completely severed residual connections binding humanity with external natural constructs it now takes itself able to supplant through synthetic reproduction. The complex relationship between human civilization and untamed natural forces maintains an enduring central thematic presence across the developmental trajectory of seminal English literature for over a millennium, providing a vivid index of our shifting psychological and ethical orientations as humankind oscillated between yearning for mastery and pursued harmony.

A pendular movement emerges between conflicting impulses seeking their fulfillment in diametric relationships with the natural world surrounding us - either its fearsome power stimulates glorious defiance, or benign grace fosters humble accommodation. Literature maps each generations' uneasy equilibrium established between these contradictory poles- collapsing old compromised truces before nHew tentative alliances temporarily resolve the underlying elemental tensions binding together two eternally estranged worlds tragically fated for unity.

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