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SUSTAINABLE FUTURES IN UTOPIAN AND DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WORKS BY THOMAS MORE, ALDOUS HUXLEY AND MARGARET ATWOOD

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 06/01/2025 Accepted: 16/01/2025	
Keywords Sustainability, Utopian/Dystopian Literature, Technological Advancement, Social Justice, Environmental Stewardship	This research examines sustainability in utopian and dystopian literature through the works of Thomas More, Aldous Huxley, and Margaret Atwood, focusing on the balance between technological advancement, social justice, and environmental stewardship. More's Utopia envisions equality as central to harmony, while Huxley's Brave New World and Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale caution against societies prioritising control over freedom, leading to environmental and human crises. Technology emerges as a double-edged theme—used for improvement in Utopia, exploited for manipulation in Brave New World, and both enabling and threatening in The Handmaid's Tale. The study also explores the tension between individual responsibility and collective action, with More emphasising communal accountability, Huxley depicting enforced conformity, and Atwood advocating for resistance and collaboration to foster change.
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INTRODUCTION

Utopian and dystopian literature has served centuries as a framework through which society reflects on its present condition and contemplates possible futures. These genres of literature often engage issues of social, political, and environmental relevance, sometimes offering critiques of dominant systems while simultaneously proposing other paradigms. This research will explore the concept of sustainability as portrayed by three authors: Thomas More, Aldous Huxley, and Margaret

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Atwood. By considering their interpretations of utopia and dystopia, one can learn from the challenges and opportunities of establishing a sustainable future.

Thomas More's *Utopia* and the Ideal Society

Thomas More's *Utopia* is normally regarded as one of the foundational texts for the genre of utopian literature in which a community finally achieved its ideal balance among people, economics, and the environment. This book highly emphasizes collective ownership, equal distribution of goods, and explicit denial of worldly values. Besides eliminating the inequalities arising from private ownership, this form of property ownership inculcates a shared responsibility toward the community's well-being. In addition, this equitable distribution of resources ensures no individual in society is in need for some of life's basic needs, thus easing the pressure on the environment.

In Utopia, the social structure is essentially agrarian, involving sustainable agriculture and judicious use of resources. Such agricultural bias not only ensures reliable food but furthers ecological sustainability. The limited reliance on industrial approaches and monoculture farming reduces the negative impact so often wrought by such methods upon the environment. Finally, the resource management aspect of this society ensures healthy and sustainable exploitation of such resources, avoiding depletion and waste.

In addition to common ownership, equitable distribution, and proper agriculture, Utopia places high stress on education and intellectual development. Society takes a strong interest in education for all, making sure that everyone becomes well-informed and even skilled in such particular skills that might be necessary. This is supportive of personal growth and the growth of welfare in society. Utopia can work out conscious choices about its future through developing an informed and educated citizenry, and it can ensure its institutions function well.

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and the Dystopian Future

Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* depicts a dystopian future wherein societal stability is achieved through the manipulation of individuals genetically and psychologically while suppressing personal thoughts and emotions. In this society, called the World State, there exists consumerism, stringent adherence to uniformity, and the evasion of pain. People are cloned into one of five classes, called castes, with a specific function in society and are programmed from birth to love their status. The World State has eliminated poverty, sickness, and war, but the trade-offs were in the loss of individual freedom, imagination, and true human connection.

It has led the World State to a community that emphasizes superficial pleasures and immediate delights. Inhabitants are encouraged to consume the products and services, very often without considering the after-effects of their actions. This ultimately results in a society that is extremely wasteful and unsustainable. Also, the enormous dependence on technology and industrial processes has taken its toll on the environment. The society's mode of production has brought about air and water pollution, waste management problems, scarcity of natural resources, and finally climatic change.

Notwithstanding technological advancement, the World State is fundamentally an imperfect society. The citizens are in a state of utter deprivation of all real human relationships, aesthetic expression, and meaningful realization of existence. The societal requirement for uniformity, with the stagnation of creative thought and feeling, has produced humanity uniformly grey, without diverging variation, and creatively dead. Sure, the denizens of the World State are happy, but it is fake, built upon an idea of happiness rather than actual joy. Huxley's work of literature becomes a warning of dangers which exist with unbridled technological advancement and the possible potential of oppression by one's gadgets.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and the Erosion of Freedom

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* portrays a dystopian future where a patriarchal theocracy dominates the societal structure, where women's rights have been stripped away and put into roles focused only on reproduction, while the environment is damaged due to pollution and resource exhaustion. The story underlines interrelated concerns between social, political, and environmental conditions, as the degradation of freedom and human rights can produce extremely serious outcomes for individuals but also for the planet itself. The totalitarian government of *The Handmaid's Tale* controls the lives of its inhabitants and at the same time exploits nature for their gain. It contributes to ecological degradation and continues to empower the oppressive regime even more. Such a story is an exemplary warning about the dangers that may come along with an unchecked authoritarian regime and how human rights as well as the ecology must be protected.

Comparative Analysis: Sustainability and Human Flourishing

While More, Huxley, and Atwood present vastly different visions of the future, their works share a common theme: the importance of sustainability for human flourishing. In *Utopia*, More envisions a society that has achieved a harmonious balance with its environment through sustainable practices and communal living. In *Brave New World*, Huxley warns of the dangers of unchecked technological progress and the potential for a society to become enslaved to its own creations. In

The Handmaid's Tale, Atwood explores the consequences of a society that has sacrificed its values and freedoms in the name of stability and control.

These works suggest that a sustainable future requires a balance between technological advancement, social justice, and environmental stewardship. It is not enough to simply develop new technologies or implement sustainable practices; we must also address the underlying social and political structures that contribute to environmental degradation and inequality.

Sustainability and Social Justice

Beyond the environmental aspects, More, Huxley, and Atwood also explore the interconnectedness of sustainability and social justice. In *Utopia*, More envisions a society where social equality and economic justice are fundamental principles. This ensures that everyone has access to the resources necessary for a fulfilling life, reducing the pressure on the environment. Huxley's *Brave New World* highlights the dangers of a society that prioritizes stability and conformity over individual freedom and happiness. This leads to a superficial and unsatisfying existence, ultimately contributing to environmental degradation. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood demonstrates how a patriarchal society can exploit both women and the environment. The subjugation of women is inextricably linked to the destruction of the natural world.

Technological Progress and Sustainability

The role of technology is a central theme in all three works. In *Utopia*, technology is used to enhance the quality of life and promote sustainability. In *Brave New World*, technology is used to control and manipulate society, leading to a dystopian future. Atwood's novel explores the potential for technology to be used for both good and evil, depending on the intentions of those who wield it. These works suggest that technological progress is not inherently good or bad, but rather depends on how it is used.

Individual Responsibility and Collective Action

The question of individual responsibility versus collective action is also explored in these works. In *Utopia*, the community as a whole is responsible for ensuring sustainability. In *Brave New World*, individuals are conditioned to conform to societal norms and have little agency over their own lives. In *The Handmaid's Tale*, individuals must resist the oppressive regime and work collectively to achieve freedom and justice. These works suggest that while individual actions can make a difference, collective action is essential for creating a sustainable future.

CONCLUSION

The works of More, Huxley, and Atwood offer invaluable insights into the challenges and possibilities of creating a sustainable future. By exploring the interconnectedness of social, political, and environmental issues, these authors provide a framework for understanding the complex factors that shape our world. They also offer a powerful critique of the status quo, challenging us to rethink our priorities and values. While the future remains uncertain, these works offer a roadmap for a more sustainable and just society. By learning from the mistakes of the past and embracing the potential of the future, we can create a world that is both equitable and environmentally sustainable.

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