

**DEEP ECO: NOTES ON THE NATURE  
OF ECOLOGICAL UTOPIA**

**BEN, LUCY, JAY,  
AND MAIA**

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cool morning sunlight  
through the fine  
leaves & branches of  
fall-fleeced and shafted

The Birch  
grove of  
Cadast



# Deep Ecology

## Interconnectedness

- Opposing anthropocentric views of hierarchy and individualism.
- All nature, humans included, are interconnected and part of a larger system.
- In Naess' words, the 'total-field image' is 'organisms as knots in the biospherical net', that 'an intrinsic relation between two things A and B is such that the relation belongs to the definitions or basic constitutions of A and B, so that without the relation, A and B are no longer the same things'[1].
- Deep ecology rejects the post-enlightenment view that humanity is superior to the natural world and advocates for ecological egalitarianism.

## Community

- Advocates for smaller communities and de-centralised government. Argues for an ethos of 'living-in-place', 'following the necessities and pleasures of life as they are uniquely presented by a particular site'[2].
- A vision of ecologically sustainable and self-sufficient living would be beneficial to both the world and human happiness. Deep Ecology envisions settlements of under 1,000 people and wider communities of up to 10,000. Land is communally owned and worked, landscapes can return to their state pre-human intervention.

## Human interference

- The idea that human interference with nature has reached a critical level, to negative effects, is a primary motivation for the philosophy of Deep Ecology.
- Garforth summarises Sale's arguments that 'scientific and industrial worldviews had led not only to imminent environmental catastrophe but also to a disenchantment of the world with debilitating consequences for the human psyche'[3].
- Opposes exploitation of land and resources for individualistic gain.



## DEEP ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES IN 'A CRYSTAL AGE' AND 'THE WORD FOR WORLD IS FOREST'(TWWIF)

TWWIF addresses Deep Ecological principles through the contrast between the Human and Athshean relationship with nature. Le Guin harshly outlines the Terrans' commodity-based view of the natural world, epitomised by Davidson's opening narrative 'savagery and ignorance wiped out, it would be a paradise, a real Eden'[4]. The use of the word 'Eden' is particularly ironic, as it is used to suggest opportunity, a new start (to be stripped of its wood and sold), whereas the biblical Eden, a garden, is deemed perfection as it is. In contrast, the Athshean 'word for world is also the word for forest'[5].

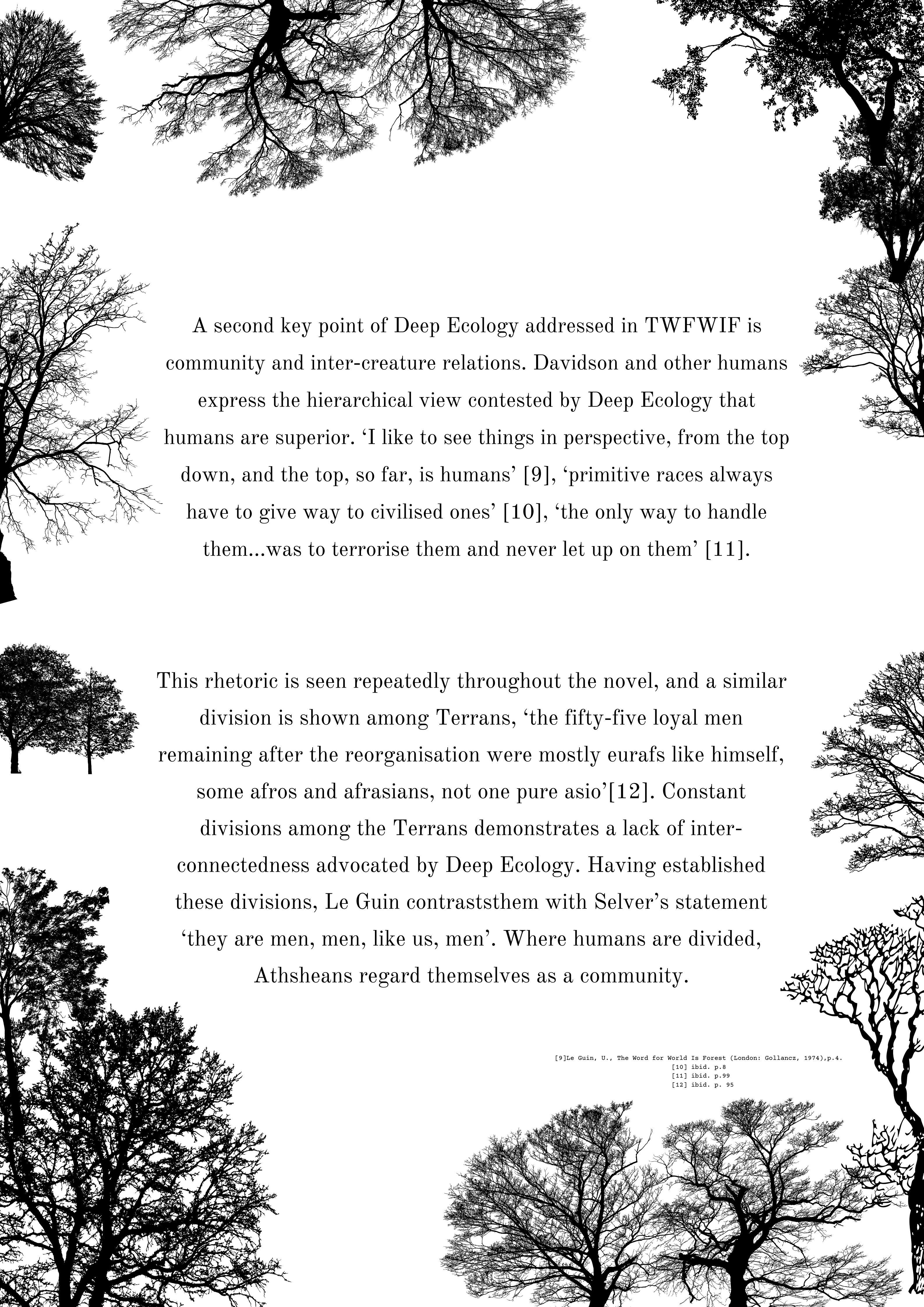
This is contrasted by the phrase 'the Athshean word for world is also the word for forest' [6], which also makes up the title of the novel. Where Terrans such as Davidson view the forest as something 'worth more than gold', a commodity to be sold, the language of the Athsheans draws no distinction between the forest and the entire world, suggesting the forest is the extent of their perception and all that they are resides within it, a perspective far more compatible with the Deep Ecology ethos.

In response to this, when the Terrans work against the forest, the forest works against them. Davidson's experience of the 'damned planet' [7] in the final chapters is entirely as an enemy: 'something in the air, maybe pollens from all those trees, acting as some kind of drug' [8]. The forest is not only an outside obstruction, but a pervasive force invading his body. Here Athshea demonstrates the principle of interconnectedness vital to Deep Ecology as the enemy to the Athsheans is treated as an enemy to the forest.

[4]Le Guin, U., *The Word for World Is Forest* (London: Gollancz, 1974),p.3.

[5] [6] *ibid.* p.48

[7] [8] *ibid.* p. 94

The page is framed by black silhouettes of various trees, including deciduous and coniferous species, against a white background. The trees are positioned at the top, bottom, and sides, creating a naturalistic border around the central text.

A second key point of Deep Ecology addressed in TFWWIF is community and inter-creature relations. Davidson and other humans express the hierarchical view contested by Deep Ecology that humans are superior. ‘I like to see things in perspective, from the top down, and the top, so far, is humans’ [9], ‘primitive races always have to give way to civilised ones’ [10], ‘the only way to handle them...was to terrorise them and never let up on them’ [11].

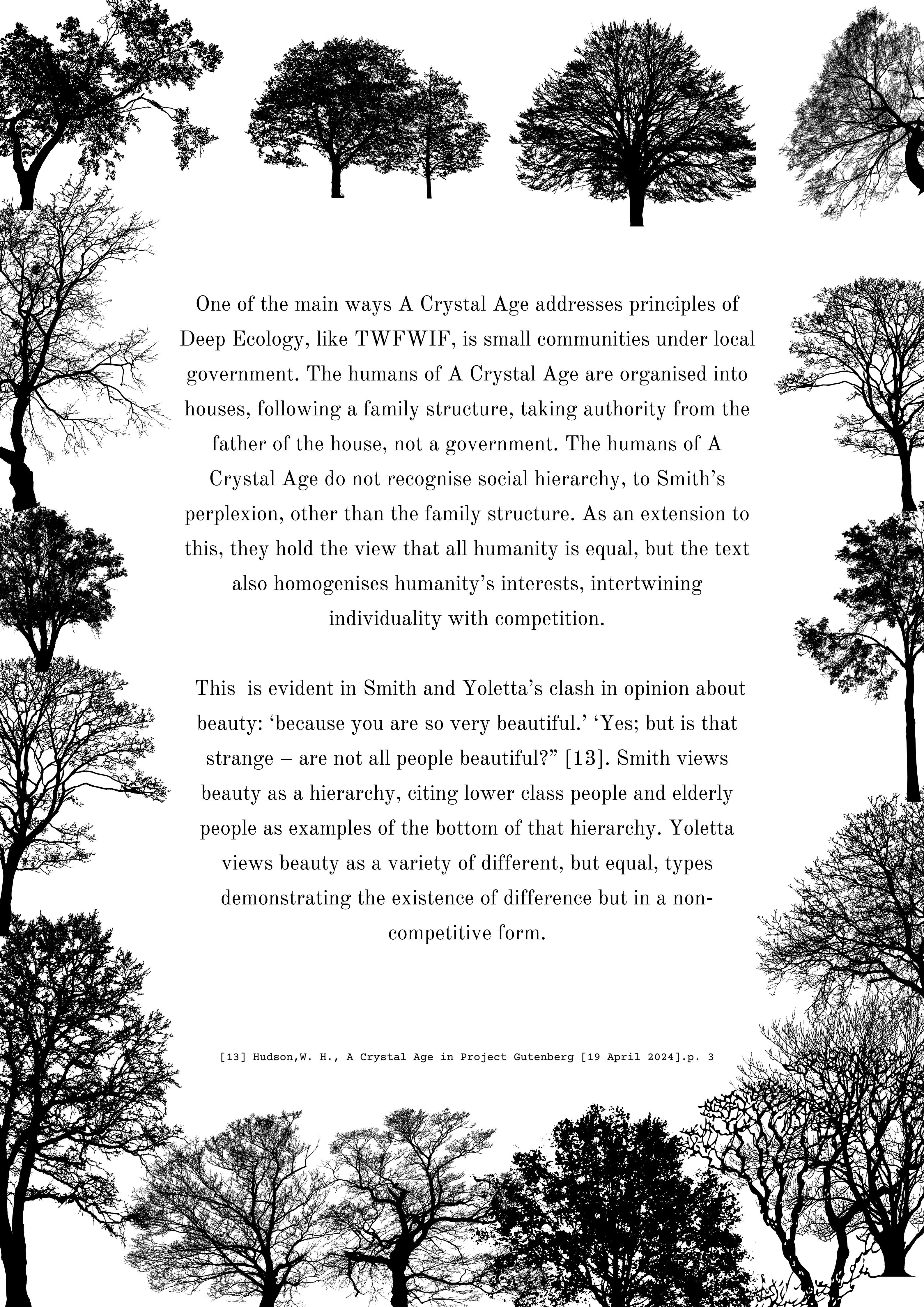
This rhetoric is seen repeatedly throughout the novel, and a similar division is shown among Terrans, ‘the fifty-five loyal men remaining after the reorganisation were mostly eurafs like himself, some afros and afrasians, not one pure asio’[12]. Constant divisions among the Terrans demonstrates a lack of interconnectedness advocated by Deep Ecology. Having established these divisions, Le Guin contraststhem with Selver’s statement ‘they are men, men, like us, men’. Where humans are divided, Athsheans regard themselves as a community.

[9]Le Guin, U., *The Word for World Is Forest* (London: Gollancz, 1974),p.4.

[10] *ibid.* p.8

[11] *ibid.* p.99

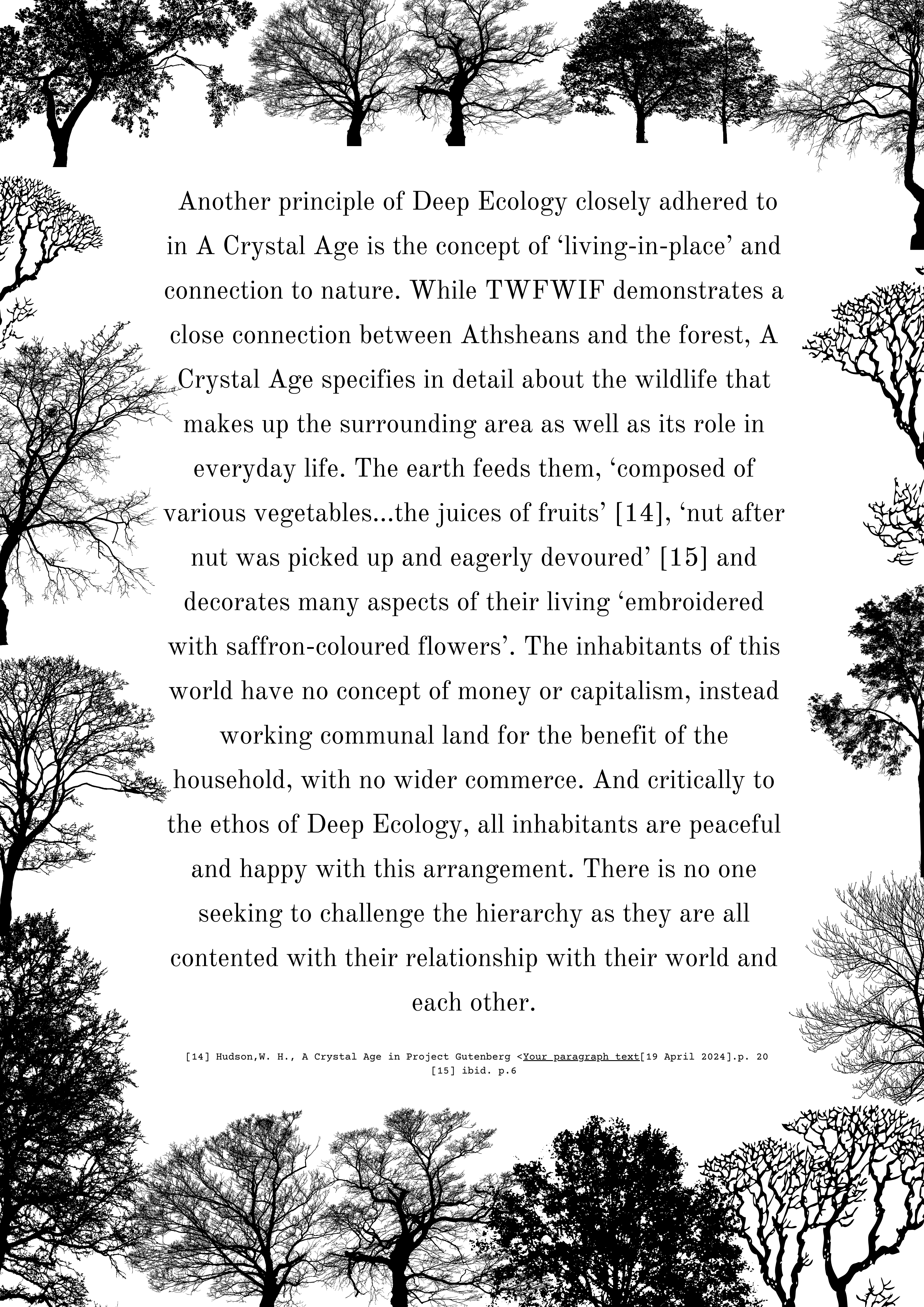
[12] *ibid.* p. 95

The page is framed by silhouettes of various trees, including deciduous and coniferous species, against a white background. The trees are positioned around the edges of the page, creating a natural border.

One of the main ways A Crystal Age addresses principles of Deep Ecology, like TFWWIF, is small communities under local government. The humans of A Crystal Age are organised into houses, following a family structure, taking authority from the father of the house, not a government. The humans of A Crystal Age do not recognise social hierarchy, to Smith's perplexion, other than the family structure. As an extension to this, they hold the view that all humanity is equal, but the text also homogenises humanity's interests, intertwining individuality with competition.

This is evident in Smith and Yoletta's clash in opinion about beauty: 'because you are so very beautiful.' 'Yes; but is that strange – are not all people beautiful?' [13]. Smith views beauty as a hierarchy, citing lower class people and elderly people as examples of the bottom of that hierarchy. Yoletta views beauty as a variety of different, but equal, types demonstrating the existence of difference but in a non-competitive form.

[13] Hudson, W. H., A Crystal Age in Project Gutenberg [19 April 2024].p. 3

The page features a central text block surrounded by black silhouettes of various trees and branches. The silhouettes are positioned at the top, bottom, and sides, creating a frame around the text. The trees vary in shape and size, with some having dense foliage and others being bare. The background is plain white.

Another principle of Deep Ecology closely adhered to in A Crystal Age is the concept of ‘living-in-place’ and connection to nature. While TFWWIF demonstrates a close connection between Athsheans and the forest, A Crystal Age specifies in detail about the wildlife that makes up the surrounding area as well as its role in everyday life. The earth feeds them, ‘composed of various vegetables...the juices of fruits’ [14], ‘nut after nut was picked up and eagerly devoured’ [15] and decorates many aspects of their living ‘embroidered with saffron-coloured flowers’. The inhabitants of this world have no concept of money or capitalism, instead working communal land for the benefit of the household, with no wider commerce. And critically to the ethos of Deep Ecology, all inhabitants are peaceful and happy with this arrangement. There is no one seeking to challenge the hierarchy as they are all contented with their relationship with their world and each other.

[14] Hudson, W. H., A Crystal Age in Project Gutenberg <[Your paragraph text](#)> [19 April 2024]. p. 20

[15] *ibid.* p.6

## ON THE ISSUE OF 21ST CENTURY POLITICS, APRIL 2024 NEWS THAT UK CLIMATE GOALS ARE WEAKENING

In light of:

Mr Sunak delayed a ban on new petrol and diesel cars, and weakened targets on phasing out gas boilers,

Mr Stark also said it was "desperately disappointing" that the SNP government in Edinburgh had ditched one of its climate targets this week

"You look out your window and you see we've had, you know, the wettest 18 months ever in this country, we've got the hottest year on record in the last 12 months."

Davidson:

· So what? You can't expect the country to stop moving for the sake of a few trees. The country needs to run. Cars need petrol, we know where to get it from, so we take it. Why should everyone change to appease a few bleeding-heart tree huggers? Earth's climate has gone up and down before, it will happen again. Animals just need to evolve. And if they can't, well its survival of the fittest. Deer are hunted because that's what they're there for. We'll keep on mining and logging and fracking because we can.

Selver:

· These yumens are lost. Their disconnect from the forest has sent them mad. So stuck in world-time they have lost the ability to dream. They are strangers in their own world. In this world the headman can give an order and it be obeyed all over the land, or so I am told. Then why doesn't he command the end of this destruction. Does he wish to make his whole world a dry-beach, the way his people will do to mine?

Smith:

· I say! What a turn of events. Far be it from my capability to discuss such matters, as I do not wish to cause offense from my lack of expertise in this century, but I find it a disappointment to see my great country lacking in this mission. As a proud Briton, I am reminded of some of my greatest countrymen, Gladstone, Darwin, Nelson, Lord Churchill, and wonder where the minds alike to those are in this century?








## ON A MAN NAMED SMITH

**I HAPPENED** upon a man named Smith one sullen evening in The Elephant and Castle.


That one might happen upon a man named Smith in all of London is unremarkable in the least, and in aversion of any head-shakery by those readers so inclined, I must now make the case for the most peculiar set of garments I have ever lived to witness clinging to a man.

For both Smith and Smith's kit were one in the greatest harmony: every penny of cloth, every length of lace so well suited to its wearer it seemed as if he had sprung from the Mother Earth at the ripest turn of spring, fully clad, and run on the wind straight to this lively South-London affair. He sported a dress, well-made and not unlike a kilt, long stockings and a remarkable sleeveless shirt-vest. All were of the softest sap green, and detailed with a red trim that somewhat inclined to purple. The man himself had on a troubled look, as if not long startled from the throes of some awesome dream. How he trembled, nursing a half-glass of Scotch! I, in a stupor most sociable (some beaker of brandy in my hand), set about wondering what was the sorry matter with him.


Smith had been on holiday, for which, grimace notwithstanding, he looked a more supple and ripe gentleman than the good City had ever before seen. Those trying to fit into last-year's dinner-jackets take heed: he credited the sublimity of his stout complexion chiefly to long hours at forestry and farming. I have often suspected that manual labour of the sort is keenly rewarding; in business far from the City I find myself realising that I probably know no happiness like the farmer with his scythe, the Apple-picker.




To raise life from the ground with passion and care, as all good things should we do in that manner – to temper a fine hectare’s worth of good food and, at day’s end, put in front of your wife something nice and say behold! The fruits of mine own labour; that is bliss unknown.



Naturally I assumed that a hard-working man’s portion of meat was required to fuel such a toil. To my surprise, Smith had eaten no suchlike – not one morsel of any living creature. In fact, he spoke of all the living world with such tender parity that I could not for a moment imagine harming any that might feel pain, and how light my own existence might be knowing that I made good by the Earth and caused its dwellers no harm at all.




That he spoke of nature as an old friend! No messer of mine would hold a candle, I am sorry to say, to the brother and compatriot Smith had found in our dear Country. He spoke of greenery the sort of which can bring the most wretched fellow to happiness, and spoke of great houses intertwined with the living clearing.




“One day, all the buildings of London will be of steel,” mused I, “and quite impervious to the wandering of vine or verdure that might seek to climb atop them, and, in truth, I am now quite sorry that we should not find a way to intertwine the grey and the green.”

“Perhaps”, mused Smith in a more wistful tone than yet I had heard from him, “all that is green and good in the world may creep, twist, and find its way into every part of our drab existences.”

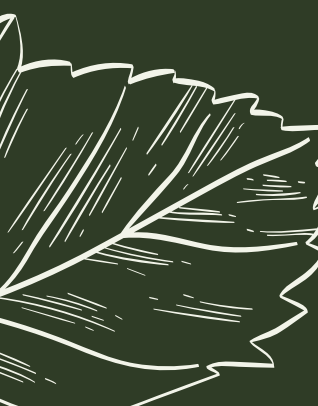


“Surely, old boy, you don’t mean all the existing systems of the world?” I returned. I was quite expecting him there and then to

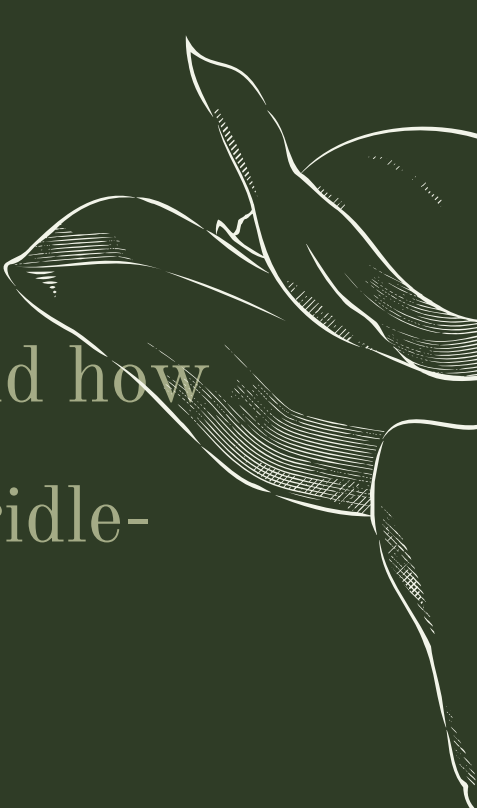







damn all that we have worked so hard for, but he simply looked at me with the long-wizened journeyman's sympathetic, sad eyes.



“In good time” said he, “as Birch grows, as Swift flees, as Thames bends until they all come to suit. Quite naturally we, creatures of the same Earth, will find that the business of nature is all our business, the business of life and joy. I say!” Cried he, “that it is no political venture but a matter most human!”



All at once I came to imagine our great cities bejewelled in green, and how proper they would look, and the colonisation of road, carriage and bridle-way by glorious healthy verdure, and what it may be like to streak through emerald pasture as friend of Hare, free of hunt, and all of a sudden, as by the will of some great sun-God, I felt awe-struck and as I turned to reveal to Smith the rapture of my enlightenment he had slinked away into the vast yawn of the night, leaving me quite alone and dampening in the London rain.



And there we have it. I thought it bizarre, but I mean to commit no offences against the truth. I see no reason why the good City of London and her associates might not incorporate a crumb or two of Smith's doctrine into themselves. I urge the reader to invite more Smith into their sooty hearts, that the City may know such a crystalline happiness once again.



*Rt Hon. Terrence Thoroughbred MP.*

[1]W.H. Hudson, *A Crystal Age* [1887](London: CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2013)

[2] Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Word for World is Forest*[1972] (New York: Berkley Medallion, 1976), 49.

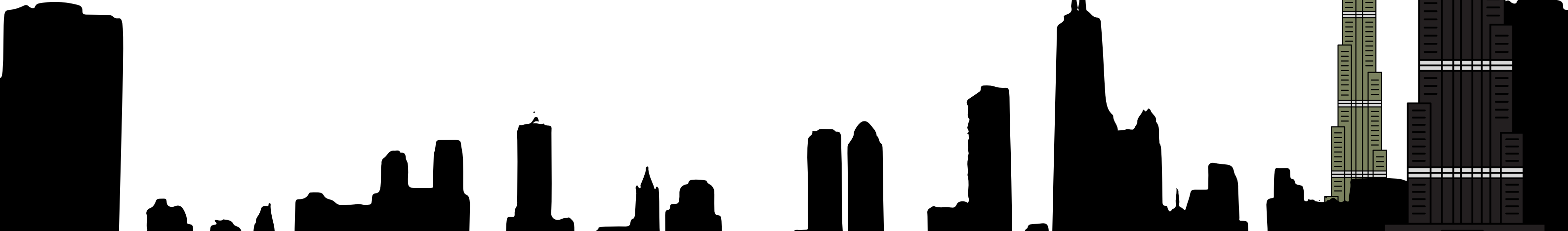
## ON THE DIALECTICS OF COLONIALISM IN ECOLOGICAL UTOPIAS

The ideation of a natural Utopia begins as a gesture defined by prelapsarian purity. The fictional landscapes of *A Crystal Age* [1], *The Word for World is Forest*[2] and *Avatar* [3] each present synergy between natural world and inhabitant. In doing so, the reader/viewer's imagination is exposed to new potentialities of a human/world relationship defined by symbiosis rather than parasitism: *A Crystal Age*'s future Earth is occupied by vegetarians whose community structure mirrors the beehive; Le Guin's 'Athsheans' are a non-violent race whose natural landscape possesses an independent subjecthood; 'Pandora' is a planet defined by inter-special connectivity and a pantheistic force known as 'Eywa'. In each case, the human Utopian visitor trope cannot passage the boundary proposed by this non-anthropocentrism. 'Smith' (ACA) is romance-obsessed and unable to adapt to the community. The Homo sapien arrivals in TWWF and *Avatar* are characterised by a violent approach to the indigenous peoples that eventually decimates their natural worlds: Le Guin's Athsheans are enslaved in a system of 'voluntary labor', the violence of which *Avatar* extends into an attempted genocide in the film's final act.

It seems the crucial distinction here is merely represented in number: the sole visitor 'Smith' can do little but attempt to adapt, whilst the militarised human occupiers of TWWF and *Avatar*'s project is typical colonial expansion. Not only do the colonisers bring violence to these pastoral Utopias, but they introduce it as a concept. The Athsheans—previously incapable of mass violence—are led to retaliate by Selver who is then described as a 'God' on account of his introduction of 'a new thing' (despite this concept's destructive properties).




[3] *Avatar*, dir. by James Cameron (Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2009) [on DVD]



Avatar's 'Na'vi'—who are distinct from Athsheans in that they hunt, albeit with a code of honour—must retaliate against the human aggressors and are thereby introduced to war. This mirroring of one's oppressors may be understood via Frantz Fanon's reading of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic:

[F]or Hegel, there is reciprocity; here [in Fanon's interpretation] the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work [...] The Negro wants to be like the master. Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave. In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object. Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.[4]

This dialectic can be transposed onto the relationship between coloniser/colonised. As this relationship is not static—in both text's we witness the process of colonisation—Hegel's 'reciprocity' is aptly reframed by Fanon. The desire for militaristic expansion meets its exact counterweight in the desire for stability, peace and community independence. However, the colonised turn away from their object—(planet, tradition, faith)—and must mirror (in defence) the behaviour of the colonisers. The point of rupture in this dialectic occurs at the introduction of violence. As the humans distort the natives' world-structure—([laughing] at the consciousness of the slave)—violence as a concept is introduced to the indigenous peoples. Violence renders them 'Gods' in TFWIF, victors in Avatar. Indeed, Le Guin's text concludes with the problem of evil: now violence has entered the community, will it stay for good?



In parallel to this, now that the Na'vi are led by a white infiltrator—regardless of his adaptability to and acceptance of tradition—is the destiny of their species thrown off course and into a Eurocentrically necessitated warlike future?

The sheer proportions of the invasions in TFWIF [1] and Avatar [2] render the introduction of this new concept of violence essentially inevitable: it is, of course, a violence characterised at first by self-defence. Crucial to the Utopian project, however, is not the physical manifestation of this concept but the point of its recognition: its (Noch-nicht-)Bewusste [(Not-Yet-)Conscious] rather than its (Noch-nicht-)Gewordene [(Not-Yet-)Become] [5]. We may turn again to Fanon and his reading of Hegel's dialectic of recognition to illustrate the point at which the potential threat is made manifest:

It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately, I deprive him even of this being-for-itself.[6]

The human other—the violent other—is granted its 'being-for-itself' when the natives reproduce its behaviour. In '[going] beyond [their] own immediate being'—in disregarding (though by force) their peaceful way of life—the Athsheans and the Na'vi face the more total extinction of their mode of existence: indeed, the symbiotic life/world structure that rendered it Utopian. Are Utopias therefore unworkable when introduced to their opposites? This can take the shape of the arrival of armies, the arrival of the sole visitor like 'Smith' or the arrival of the reader, author, or constructor. Once the concept of violence is introduced, and recognised—like the original sin—the non-violent Utopia is destined to fail.

The Socialist Utopia provides value to Capital by obfuscating it; the Anarchist Utopia centralises decentralisation in representing it textually. Here we explore the more general concept of the anti-utopian: the key aspect that must be negated for Utopia to be produced, be that violence, greed, property, capital. In omitting these concepts we admit their existence. The Utopian program is therefore plagued by the Utopian impulse. To construct Utopia is to recognise its antithesis, to grant it a 'being-for-itself': this must cloud the project in its dim, grey fog. For an absence, too, can haunt.



This script belongs to:  
Nepo - baby actor  
of the future

Avatar 15: A Crystal Age

Texts to read for  
prep:

- A Crystal Age
- The Word for World  
is Forest

**SCENE 1**

He does not quite know how it happened, his recollection of the whole matter ebbs in a somewhat clouded condition of neo-utopian popcorn cinematography. He fancies he has gone somewhere on an Oscar-baiting botanizing expedition, but whether at home or the box office he does not know. At all events, he remembers that he has taken up the study of James Cameron's filmography with a good deal of enthusiasm, and that while hunting for some variety of boxset he sat down to rest on the edge of a hypermodern lounge-ish cinema stool. Perhaps it was on the ledge of an overhanging Odeon; anyhow, if he reminds rightly, the IMAX gave way all about him, precipitating him through the screen.

SMITH

Ughhhhhhhhh. What is this web of entwined plant root, embedding me in the ground like some profound slimy swaddling bands?

Smith writhes and removes sticky tentacles from his beer-ballooned form. What appears to be plants begin to move.

SMITH

Oh gee wizz.

His yellowed eyes move to map the shape of some new godless creatures, intertwined in a hypersexual symbiosis that renders its author freudishly ignoble. In this strange, new land, everything is connected. Quite literally. Bizarre blue energy pulses through the neck-tails of supine pterodactyls, as Smith bursts to the surface like a vaselined pinball. He wipes himself down, surveying the territory. In the distance he observes some kind of ceremony. He approaches.

HUGE BLUE ANDROGYNOUS MAMMALIAN

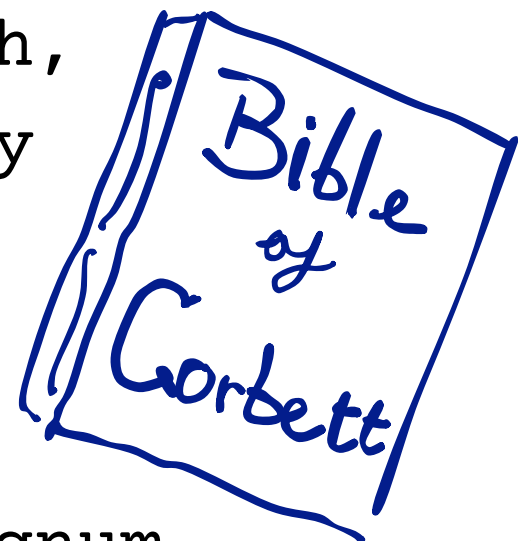
What tailless insect emerges forth?

SMITH

(craning his neck to observe his lacking behind)  
Pardon?... I.. I.. I am Smith, Forenameless Smith.  
Who are you? Where am I?

HUGE-R BLUE-R ANDROGYNOUS MAMMALIAN

Smith. We will call you: '●○✕◆≡' In our tongue it means 'Visitor Trope of Narratological Purpose'. You have journeyed to Pandora to witness our ceremony? We speak the rites of our fallen brother, and transfuse his soul into a new body. Stem-cell research has progressed rapidly here. The key is in the dogs. (We learnt this from The Corbettian Bible). Come forth, pork-ish friend of round shape, and bless the body with us.



Smith approaches impishly, performing a half-baked signum crucis that effects small wincing amongst his new blue friends. In the middle distance he observes a slightly less huge, maternally shapely Elvin creature. His eyes widen in a blatant act of fantasy fetishism. She is definitely too young for him.

SMITH

My divine creature! They were stripped from us in a moment of food standards crisis, but the blue Smartie is back! The absolute Elvin wonder of your suspicious symmetry! The sheer Tolkienism of it all! Fredrich Jameson, eat your heart out!





YOLETTA

Dear Sir, I fear your primitivist rendering of me is typical of a cultural climate in which uncomfortable art is acceptable as long as it's sexy. You and your other white saviour archetypes should stick to Dune Part II and leave the serious progressive Utopianism to us.

SMITH

(projecting in slow English as a  
gammon Ex-pat to a Spanish waiter)

ME-LIKE-YOU-COS-YOU-PRETTY.

YOLETTA

Sir. My disgust in your direction is such that prose, regardless of its register, cannot express it. You have encroached upon our enclave with such typical alien oafishness that I fear you have become, yourself, a representative of the Blochian divide between Utopian impulse and its program. You can plug yourself in to all the pterodactyls of our plane, but you will never adapt to our ways. Here, nature is body and body is soul. The way of the water cannot be traversed by a form as inferior as yours. Now, let us take you to our inexplicable mansion where we will no doubt stumble into more misunderstandings, for you cannot comprehend our crystal purity of heart. Anyway, I have a nice vial of tasty liquid with your name on it.



SMITH

(thrilled to cure the oppressions of time and disease)

Sounds delicious!

**END OF SCENE 1**



## Milk-white Bull

Standing at the turn of the season  
having strayed over ankle depth  
into the tripoint confluence  
met gently in the forest as in siblings.

You at that well-spruced height  
Crow Rook and Raven so admire  
standing in the back of the woods  
earth in teeth.

This hollow has grown for you  
now the old trees are long gone  
gone on down the trail.

Blue Jay eyes  
what's nature between us in the shallow  
Milk-white Bull-bellow laughter near end.

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