

I. Symbiotic Relation between Nature and Culture

This study attempts to examine two narratives, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) and Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (1996) from ecocritical perspective with special attention to symbiosis between nature and culture. The study makes an attempt to explore various symbiotic relationships between human and non human- world by deploying the ideas developed by ecocritical scholars such as Barbara Paterson's concept of "symbiosis", A. N. Whitehead's "nature as organism", Lawrence Buell's "biocentrism", and Arne Naess's "deep ecology".

Symbiosis refers to a closed, prolonged association between two or more organisms of different species that normally benefits both members. In other words, symbiosis is an interaction between the members of biotic and abiotic community. De Bary used the term "symbiosis" in a similar vein. Lynda J. Goff cites Bary's semantic consideration of symbiosis as, "De Bary made it clear that his term symbiosis includes all types of associations (interactions) between dissimilarly named organisms" (255). All being and thing are dependent on each other in some ways. Okpala argues in Igbo metaphysics "wherever something stands, something will stand beside it" (560). Nothing stands by itself, nothing is meaning in isolation. There is interconnection among all things: fauna, humans and abiotic world. Nature and culture are dependent on each other for their well-being. The origination of dependence, as Barbara Paterson states, can be found in nature as the biological concept of symbiosis (18). Symbiosis describes the relations which natural entities have developed through the course of time, to benefit from each other's existence. Symbiotic relationship between nature and culture is, in most of the cases, beneficial as Dirk-Jan Evers argues in his *Symbiosis Through Autonomy in the Community of Nature*, "Although not all symbiotic relations are reciprocal, however all organisms share, create an intricate

web that benefits and gives rise to all entities. Humans also developed as knots in this web and are therefore dependent on and part of these symbiotic relations” (13).

Because humans form a part of this web, it is a delusion to divide the world in the categories of nature and non-nature.

A. N. Whitehead’s the idea of “nature as organism” helps us to understand the notion of symbiosis in environment oriented literary criticism. Nature should be conceived as a system or organization consisting of interdependent parts. Justifying nature as one of the integral parts of the whole interaction process in the cosmos, Whitehead puts “Nature is conceived as a complex of prehensive unification. Space and time exhibit the general scheme of interlocked relations of these prehensions (401). Nature as an organic unity must undergo various different processes fulfilling a complex but a necessary cyclical life to be a complete life. Whitehead further contends that “a philosophy of nature must concern itself at least with these six notions: change, value, eternal objects, endurance, organism, interfusion... In a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times” (406). Organic models profess a harmonious and symbiotic relationship between human and nature.

The concept of *biocentrism* is closely related to a higher level of category called *symbiosis*. “Biocentrism’ or semi-synonymously called “ecocentrism” is a view that regards all organisms as members of a larger biotic network or community in which each member emphasizes the value, rights, and survival of individual organic beings. Lawrence Buell in his *The Future of Environmental Criticism* views biocentrism as “The view that all organisms, including humans are part of a larger biotic web or network or community whose interests must constrain or direct or govern the human interest” (54). Biocentrism is most commonly associated with the work of Paul Taylor, especially his book *Respect for Nature: A Theory of*

Environmental Ethics (1986). Taylor maintains that biocentrism is an "attitude of respect for nature", whereby one attempts to make an effort to live one's life in a way that respects the welfare and inherent worth of all living creatures. Biocentrism can be taken as an antithesis to anthropocentrism. Anthropocentric activities are very much detrimental to well-being of both nature and culture, and therefore this anthropogenic mind setup must be changed.

The idea of "deep ecology" shares many things in common with "nature as organism" and "biocentrism" and is thus related to "symbiosis". The phrase "deep ecology" stems from "deep ecological movement" initiated by Arne Naess and other ecocritical scholars such as George Sessions in 1970's. Deep ecologists argue that the natural world is a subtle balance of complex interrelationships in which the existence of organisms is dependent on the existence of others within ecosystems (32)s. Arne Naess and George Sessions have proposed eight basic principles to deep ecology. Out of these eight principles, (1) principle is worth mentioning; "the well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (49). Every aspect of human and non-human world should be respected for what it is; not for what it does.

Symbiotic relationship between human and non-human world has been manifested in *Ecotopia*. *Ecotopia* (1975) by Ernest Callenbach is a "politics fiction" that describes, in a highly readable style, a fictional society that is egalitarian, non-patriarchal, self-managed, and ecologically conscious. *Ecotopia* is a hopeful antidote to the environmental concerns of today, set in an ecologically sound future society. Hailed by the *Los Angeles Times* as the "newest name after Wells, Verne, Huxley, and Orwell," Callenbach offers a visionary blueprint for the survival of our planet . . . and

our future. Ecotopia was founded when northern California, Oregon, and Washington seceded from the Union to create a “stable-state” ecosystem: the perfect balance between human beings and the environment. Now, twenty years later, this isolated, mysterious nation is welcoming its first officially sanctioned American visitor: *New York Times-Post* reporter Will Weston. Skeptical yet curious about this green new world, Weston is determined to report his findings objectively. But from the start, he’s alternately impressed and unsettled by the laws governing Ecotopia’s earth-friendly agenda: energy-efficient “mini-cities” to eliminate urban sprawl, zero-tolerance pollution control, tree worship, ritual war games, and a woman-dominated government that has instituted such peaceful revolutions as the twenty-hour workweek and employee ownership of farms and businesses.

My primary concern in *Ecotopia* (1975) is to explore the issue why the writer is ignoring industrial progress and envisioning utopia which is not encroached by cultural and industrial advancements and influences. Why does the writer envision such a world? I argue that the writer in this fiction wants to see his home/culture as much earth friendly as possible. For example; energy-efficient “mini-cities” to eliminate urban sprawl, zero-tolerance pollution control, tree worship, ritual war games, and a woman-dominated government, etc. which do not harshly encroach the balance between nature and culture.

John Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (1996) narrates a true story of a young man, Chris McCandless who decides to leave society behind in exchange for the refreshing rawness of the Alaskan wilderness. McCandless spurns different social and institutional conventions, such as the well-recognized need to achieve a good education in order to pursue a career, followed by the need to increase one’s material wealth. McCandless is determined to live his life the way he wants. His decision to

journey across the United States of America and eventually into the Alaska wilderness is, in a way, a means of emancipating himself from his upper-middleclass life along with its obligations and expectations, such as getting a job, earning a lot of money, and buying fancy cars to prove that you really are someone. Jon Nyman argues, “McCandless wanted, much like Thoreau, to elevate his spirit by leading a simple life close to nature” (19). Chris has everything a person can wish for: financial security, athletic talent, intelligence, etc. yet he chooses to abandon all of this for a simple lifestyle of loneliness in the wilderness that eventually results in his death.

McCandless of *Into the Wild* (1996) ignores civilized way of life full of materialistic thirst in the modern sense. He is not driven by materialistic desire but is guided by an impulse to be in a natural state of life. However, his choice proves detrimental to his life ultimately. Therefore, wilderness/ nature/ back to Nature is not the solution; culture is not all apart from nature; they are symbiotically connected to each other. I argue that what you need is a judicious symbiosis between nature and culture; but not a total rejection of either. So, nature and culture relationship is always a dialogic one.

The research questions that the study attempts to seek are: (a) how does symbiotic imagination help people in maintaining well-being of both human and non-human community? (b) what are the consequences of maintaining/breaking the symbiotic bonding between nature and culture? And, (c) how is human’s well-being shaped and affected by human’s interaction/prehension with the non-human world?

The objectives of this study are to: (a) examine, interpret and analyze how humans are affected and shaped by their attitudes to non-human world. (b) explore what humans’ thoughts are about nature and culture? (c) reflect upon how biocentric approach to life influence positively?; and (d) examine, analyze, and interpret the

consequences of maintaining/breaking the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture.

This research study applies Barbara Paterson's concept of "symbiosis", A. N. Whitehead's "nature as organism", Lawrence Buell's "biocentrism", and Arne Naess's "deep ecology". In the modern Western view, nature is often seen as something outside the world of humans. This nature/ non-nature dichotomy, however, is a delusion, as it overlooks the interdependency that is established through symbiotic relations in the community of nature. Environmental theorists reject the concept of treating nature and culture in binary position. They advocate for the symbiotic bonding between all parts and members of human and non-human world for the well-being of the entire cosmos. Symbiosis creates diversity on Earth. Asserting the importance of symbiosis Joshuwa Lord maintains, "Diversity in habitants on Earth is astounding-whether on land or in the sea-and this is in part due to symbiosis" (64). In symbiosis, two dissimilar organisms are closely associated with each other, with at least one organism receiving unique benefits from the relationship. The specific parameters to understand the symbiosis between biotic and abiotic community in this study, "nature as organism" by A. N. Whitehead, Laurence Buell's "biocentrism", and Arne Naess's "deep ecology" have been taken into account. The concepts like "wilderness", "society", "civilization", and of course "nature" and "culture", are used and projected in the study as the defining words. "Nature" in this dissertation has been viewed as geographical areas that are unexploited by humans, largely uninhabited by humans, and to the extent it is possible, unaffected by humans. I am interested in the biological kind of nature (trees, rocks, rivers, mountains, landscapes, and entire ecosystem) rather than the philosophical kind. Things that in this dissertation are considered as parts of nature are things that were created without any

direct involvement of humans. Concepts like “wilderness” have been used synonymously to “nature”, that is; geographical areas that are largely unaffected by humankind. Everything from human-made objects and institutions, human relationships, social conventions and traditions, towns, laws-everything that was made by humans are considered to be “culture”. Concepts like “society”, “civilization”, “industrialization” have been considered to be synonymous to “culture”, since they are also products of human creation.

The study is limited to the following aspects: (a) This study examines only two texts as primary sources of investigation, namely, *Ecotopia* (1975) by Ernest Callenbach and *Into the Wild* (1996) by Jon Krakauer; (b) the study pays especial attention to explore symbiosis between nature and culture from the perspectives of “biocentrism”, “nature as organic unity” and “deep ecology”; it does not cover other aspects of human-nature relationship; (c) the findings and/or results inferred from the study can not be generalized to every aspect of nature-culture relationship.

The findings of this study will redound to the benefits of society considering that symbiotic relationship between nature and culture plays a significant role in science and technology of today. The study will help humans to understand the concept, significance, and role of symbiosis between nature and culture thereby contributing to advocating for and applying symbiotic concept in their day to day life. More specifically, humans will understand that in a symbiotic relationship, individuals of different specie form persistent associations from which they all benefit. The greater demands for students of all levels with ecocriticism and ecology background justifies the need for more effective, life-changing, and earth friendly research studies, teaching-learning approach. Thus, schools, colleges/campuses, and universities that apply the recommended approach derived from the results of this

study will be able to teach teachers, students, and guardians to train better. For the researcher, the study will help them uncover critical areas in the educational and/or in research activities process that many researchers were not able to explore.

As the research question and objectives set the directions and destination of the research, the following pages review the relevant literature. Considering the scope conditioned by its title, research questions, and objectives, this study confines its review of relevant literature (secondary and primary) to, basically, three areas: literature related to theoretical frame of “environmental criticism”, the literature related to the conceptual debates on key concepts such as “biocentrism”, “anthropocentrism”, “organism”, “nature”, “culture” and “symbiosis”, and the literature of the primary texts, viz. Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia*, and Jonn Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*.

Ecocriticism, the field devoted to the study of the nature-culture relationship, aims to pay attention to the importance of nature and its appropriation in culture. Greg Garrard writes: "The widest definition of the subject of ecocriticism is the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself"(5). Hence, it may be suggested that in terms of ecocriticism, humanity is not a fixed concept, but is open to analysis and the resulting re-interpretation. The influence of nature could be studied in any aspect of culture, but possibly the richest area for studying the representation of nature is literature. Similarly, Rueckert defines ecocritism as “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature” (qtd. in Glotfelty xx).

CheryllGlotfelty defines ecocriticism in terms of literature as follows:

Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism

examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (xviii)

Ecocriticism is a discourse that studies the relationship between human and non-human world by means of literature and it does so from earth-friendly perspective. As a critical discourse ecocriticism acts as a mediator between the human and the nonhuman stressing the influence of the actual physical environment on human beings and the representation of human perceptions of nature in literature.

Ecocriticism as critical discourse has developed over time and changed its focus. Generally, the development of ecocriticism is divided into two waves. However, the boundary between the two waves and differences in their approaches is by no means clear-cut. Lawrence Buell, one of the key figures in ecocriticism, has analyzed the differences between first-wave ecocriticism and second-wave ecocriticism. He explains that first-wave ecocriticism focused mainly on the divide between a human being and the natural environment, equating the environment with physical nature and seeking to unite humanity with the environment (25), or, as John Elder has put it, to overcome "the hierarchical separations between human beings and other elements of the natural world" (qtd.in Buell, 22). This view also holds that nature writing is the most representative environmental genre. Second-wave ecocriticism, on the other hand, does not impose strict limits to what constitutes environment. Rather, the term environment does not apply only to nature, but also to artificial (built) environments and possible combinations of the two.

Conflict between nature and culture followers has created a tendency to foreground one and marginalize another. Such tendency is detrimental to both human

culture and nature's unhindered well-being. Modern western industrialized notion of viewing humans as superior to nature has resulted in environmental apocalypses. In a compelling and multi-dimensional account of the crisis of reason, our culture's life-destroying practices and ethical and spiritual bankruptcy are closely linked to our failure to situate ourselves as ecological beings. Informed by feminist thought, post-colonial theory, indigenous philosophy, and a rich tapestry of research, Val Plumwood provides a provocative diagnosis of the cultural illusions that fuel the contemporary environmental crisis. She posits:

We can now spell out a parallel concept of 'human-centrism', and characterize as anthropocentric those patterns of belief and treatment of the human/nature relationship which exhibit this same kind of hegemonic structure. By extension we can categorize as anthropocentric certain cultures and formations of identity which typically host such patterns. In anthropocentric culture, nature and animals are constructed according to the same logic of the One and the Other, with nature as Other in relation to human in much the same way that women are constructed as Other in relation to men, and those regarded as 'coloured' are constructed as Other in relation to those considered 'without colour', as 'white'. (106)

Plumwood perceives the similarities between nature, women, and the 'coloured' people who have been marginalized throughout the history of human civilizations. Although men are living in nature and they have no existence without nature, they consider her as Other. Plumwood critiques this othering tendency of men to nature.

Ecocriticism can be interpreted as a discourse which concerns the interconnectedness between human and non-human world and encourages humans to

think, feel, decide and act accordingly in order to maintain the symbiosis and thus create diversity in the ecosystem. Since ecocriticism has interdisciplinary nature, it invites all perspective into its tent in order to understand the co-existence of living and non-living entities. So, it is not just a means of analyzing nature in literature; it implies a move towards a bio-centric world view, and extension of ethics, a broadening human conception, global community to include non-human life form and the physical environment. Ecocriticism rests on the principle of “earth-centeredness”. In biocentrism all organisms are interdependent on each other. It considers humans as members of the earth’s community where, there is complex web of interconnected elements in the universe. It views the need of human beings to exist in harmony with nature. In biocentric perspective, nature deserves the same value and respect compared to humans. Humans are equal member of the entire biotic and abiotic community.

Focusing on the biocentric outlook on nature, Paul W. Taylor argues:

The biocentric outlook on nature has four main components: (1) humans are thought of as members of the Earth’s community of life, holding that membership on the same terms as apply to all the nohuman members. (2) The Earth’s natural ecosystems as a totality are seen as a complex web of interconnected elements, with the sound biological functioning of the others. (3) Each individual organism is conceived of as a teleological center of life, pursuing its own good in its own way. (4) Whether we are concerned with standards of merit or with the concept of inherent worth, the claim that humans by their very nature are superior to other species is a groundless claim and, in the light of elements (1), (2), (3) above, must be rejected as nothing more

than an irrational bias in our own favor. (76)

Humans are as equal members as members of non-human community on the Earth, and therefore they all have same and equal right to live and blossom along with their responsibility to maintain diversity in the cosmos.

The idea of “deep ecology” helps us to understand the relationship between human and non-human world. Devall and Sessions offer the following ideas about deep ecology:

Humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity [of life forms] except to satisfy vital needs. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating *life quality* (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. (70)

David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb put similar ideas on deep ecology:

Deep ecology embodies more than a love of and identification with nature, and a simple recognition that all of us, whether or not we flee from it in denial, live in the midst of an environmental crisis. It also purports to be the guiding philosophy of an environmental movement that seeks to slow or halt the ruin. Other philosophical or religious values guided wars of conquest or rebellion, shaped movements for national liberation or racial justice. Similarly, a renewed reverence for wilderness, endangered species or the maple tree in your front yard-not to mention an awareness of what toxic waste dumps do to people,

animals, and plant alike-can shape public policy, move us to sue polluters, change the way children are educated, and lead us to resist Monsanto's chemicalized agriculture. (2)

Deep ecology can be taken as an inclusive term which embodies different various aspects of ecological awareness such as biocentrism, symbiosis, nature as organism, and on top of these reverence for all parts and members of non-human world. In addition, deep ecology suggests that humans change the modes of perceiving the nature around them and develop a habit of living in an ecofriendly environment.

Organic unity is the idea that a thing is made up of interdependent parts. Nature, if taken as a whole entity, is also made up of different interdependent parts. The idea of "nature as organism" as suggested by A.N. Whitehead should be conceived as a system or organization consisting of interdependent parts. Whitehead puts "Nature is conceived as a complex of prehensive unification. Space and time exhibit the general scheme of interlocked relations of these prehensions (401). Nature as an organic unity must undergo various different processes fulfilling a complex but a necessary cycling life to be a complete life. Whitehead further contends that "a philosophy of nature must concern itself at least with these six notions: change, value, eternal objects, endurance, organism, interfusion... In a certain sense, everything is everywhere at all times" (406). The role and significance of nature cannot be evaluated in a dichotomous way; rather, it must be studied in relation to non-human world.

Ecologically aware people agree with a conclusion that humans and nature are connected to each other in a number of aspects. Recently, ecologically aware people have pointed up the more significance of the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture than ever. The term "symbiosis" in Greek refers to any type of a close and

long-term biological interaction between two different biological organisms. The organisms may be of the same or of different species. Heinrich Antone de Bary defines “symbiosis” as “the living together of unlike organisms” (68). Symbiosis can be obligatory, which means that one or both of the symbionts entirely depend on each other for survival, or facultative (optional) when they can generally live independently. Symbiosis is also classified by physical attachment; symbiosis in which the organisms have bodily union is called conjunctive symbiosis, and symbiosis in which they are not in union is called disjunctive symbiosis. Similarly, Howard Roster defines the term “symbiosis”, “Symbiosis is a word of Greek derivation coming from “syn” meaning “together with,” and “bios” meaning “life” together with life to natural phenomena” (23). This would mean a relationship between two entirely different organisms from which they derive a mutual benefit or at least live without harm to each other.

Western industrialized countries have contributed a lot to creating split between nature and culture. Considerable attention has been paid to the idea that people in western developed countries increasingly see themselves as separate from nature. Vining et al. maintains, “As is specified in the U.S. Wilderness Act (1964), nature is set aside as something pristine and free of the modern human touch” (1). Many authors argue that it was the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution that provided the final coffin nails for the concept of the human-nature unity. Franklin suggests that “we have become alienated from the natural world, and animals in their natural state, by three factors: science, industrialization, and urbanization” (qtd. in Vining, 89). So, in the modern Western view, nature is often seen as something outside the world of humans. This nature/non-nature dichotomy, however, is a delusion, as it overlooks the interdependency that is established through symbiotic

relations in the community of nature.

The discourse on symbiotic relationship between nature and culture has attracted a considerable attention of ecologists, biologists, environmentalists, scientists, economists, political leaders, and the like across the globe in this post-industrial age. Nature/wilderness is helpful to human kinds for a number of reasons.

Rene Dubos mentions:

The wilderness is the greatest producer of renewable sources of energy and of materials-as well as of biological species-and is, therefore, essential to the maintenance of the ecosystems of the earth.

Furthermore, human beings need primeval nature to reestablish contact now and then with their biological origins; a sense of continuity with the past and with the rest of creation is probably essential to the long range sanity of the human species. (461)

Wilderness/nature is the most important source of almost everything that is needed to both humans and nonhumans. Therefore, life particularly human's life cannot be imagined devoid of nature. The reciprocal interplay between humankind and the earth/nature can result in a true symbiosis-the word symbiosis being used here in its strong biological sense to mean a relationship of mutualism so intimate that the two components of the system undergo modifications beneficial to both. Dubos further states, "The reciprocal transformations resulting from the interplay between a given human group and a given geographical area determine the characteristics of the people and of the region, thus creating new social and environmental values" (462). Human health and well-being depends upon the balanced symbiosis between nature and culture. Zev Naveh argues, "Ecological psychologists examine the human conscious and unconscious mind as an integral part of the web of nature, in which

human health and well-being depend on a balanced mutual relationship with sustainable habitats, landscapes, and the planet as a whole” (357). Such a symbiosis should lead to the structural and functional integration of biosphere and technosphere/ecotopes into a coherent, sustainable ecosphere in which both biological and cultural evolution can be ensured.

In a separate study about the relationship between humans and nature, Jane Vining and his colleagues asked participants if they were part of or separate from nature and why, the responses they received were:

About two-thirds of the respondents replied that they considered themselves part of nature (although, interestingly, many of these individuals defined nature as free of human evidence or contact). Some of them argued that humans are part of nature by virtue of interdependency with it or simply by definition. Others argued that they were part of nature because they appreciated nature-based aesthetics such as a sunset or mountain range. Others maintained that they were a part of nature in a moral sense by virtue of actions they performed. (93)

It can be simplified that humans endeavor to affirm their unity with nature. Humans are inherently connected to nature because they can not imagine their life being alienated from nature.

In one study by Vining, et al., participants in a wilderness camp defined “nature as the opposite of civilization” (2). They also said that “nature was something that is “out there” without human involvement” (2). Haluza-Delay reports that “Nature was also said to be relaxing and undisturbed, and nature was said to be not at home” (qtd. in Vining, et al., 2).

Treating nature and culture in isolation has become detrimental to both human kinds and to the entire ecosystems. Therefore, a more inclusive and holistic approach should be adopted in trying to understand the relationship between nature and culture. Hartig offered the transactional perspective of nature, stating that aspects of humans and the environment act in defining each other. Thus, defining whether something is natural or is unnatural requires a person to reflect on a holistic basis. Hartig maintains that dividing the person and environment into discrete elements is not the goal of this perspective. He believes that each entity acts to define the other and is thus interconnected. People should stop putting up borders themselves and nature. So, in order to successfully protect the whole environment, not just small parts of it, one must eliminate these human-perceived barriers.

Different scientists, ecologists, and creative geniuses have been warning about the global problems of environmental crisis, spiritual bankruptcy, deterioration of the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture by means of literary writings. Especially, ecocritical readings of literary texts have put dire emphasis on symbiotic bonding between human and non-human world. In this connection, I have also attempted to study two narratives from ecocritical perspective. I have concentrated my study upon Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* to explore the issue of symbiotic imagination of humans in relation to nature. These two narratives depict the adverse consequences of putting nature and culture all apart in one hand, and how well-being of both biotic and abiotic community is maintained when having interconnected relationship between human and non-human world on the other.

Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* has been interpreted by different scholars from the perspectives of ecology. Aldous Huxley in *Island* (1962) interprets *Ecotopia* as:

Some ecological paradigms of the fictitious state “Ecotopia” can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy. Plato’s dialogue *Nomoi* (2008) implies an ideal sustainable and stable state in terms of politics, society, population, households, and environment, while the Ancient Stoic philosophy valued the ideal of living according to (or in harmony) with nature (2). The notion of “Ecotopia” stems from ancient Greek philosophy in which *Ecotopia* is portrayed as an earth friendly, stable, sustainable state in terms of polity, culture, population, and environment.

Hui-chun Chang illustrates *Ecotopia* as an ecological utopia in which human’s desire for having affluence in terms of economy, production; industrialization, etc. are subdued by eco friendly nature-culture relationship:

Callenbach’s *Ecotopia*, a country breaking away from America and composed of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California, is a case in point. William Weston, an American reporter dispatched by the *Times-Post* reports on the current affairs of *Ecotopia*: “[M]ankind, the *Ecotopians* assumed, was not meant for production, as the 19th and early 20th centuries had believed. Instead, humans were meant to take their modest place in a seamless, stable-state web of living organism, disturbing that web a little as possible. (253)

Ecotopia is a fictional state in which there is a good symbiosis between nature and culture. This includes respecting nature for what it is thereby resulting in a balanced place worth living for both biotic (including humans) and abiotic communities. Chang further says, “The rejection of affluence is a deliberate refusal of any assertion of human values at the expense of the ecosystem” (254). John W. Ragsdale strongly

urges the world community/culture to think and work in a way ecotopians do in order to sustain this pollutant world primarily caused by humans and their activities for fulfilling their head long thirst. He professes, “The final message from all: the world community must move toward a stable state, if it is to avoid projections that run into absurdities and if there is to be an extended, perceivable future” (358). Ragsdale further stresses his argument because it is a high time that humans proceed to establish a long lasting eco friendly place for both nature and culture, “we must approach the stable-state society not necessarily because we *want to* but because we *have to*” (359).

Roman Meinhold interprets *Ecotopia* in much as the similar way as Hui-chun Chang (1970) does. Meinhold maintains:

The novel *Ecotopia* is not a negative utopia (Dystopia) such as the dystopias *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley and *Nineteen Eighteen Four* by George Orwell. On the one hand, the utopia, points to a place (Greek: topos) that does not (Greek negation. “u”-) exist (yet) but also to a place which is good (Greek: “eu”). Hence, in many ways *Ecotopia* is “eu-topia”. (12)

Ecotopia is a place which is unlikely to exist in the mundane world, but then is good for all living and non- living things and being from ecosystem point of view. The underlying meaning could be that it is the humans who have to strive in order to make this tedious world a more lovable, and eco friendly place where there is very less or no infliction caused by human kinds. Luisa Roth reviews the book *Ecotopia* in the following manner:

Numerous of contemporary ecological ideas and approaches can be attributed to green visions as for example to the theory of *Ecotopia* by

Ernest Callenbach in 1975. Ecotopia is one of the first advanced visions of a utopia with a strong ecological perspective. Cullenbach's ideas had a significant impact on the counterculture and the Green Movement. Ecotopia embodies the archetype of an ideal ecologically and socially balanced society. Cullenbach's philosophy is based on the desire of living in perfect harmony with nature. The idea of a "stable state" is the prior mission of Ecotopia. Cullenbach states that nothing produced in Ecotopia should affect the well-being of nature which can be achieved with the aid of recycling and reusing. In Ecotopia advanced technologies are being engaged to provide a modern way of eco-friendly living whereas mass consumption and production have to be reduced. (1)

From the above lines it may be plausible to claim that ecotopia is a new theory with a powerful ecological view which focuses on ecologically and socially balanced society. This type of utopian society is very good for the well-being of nature and culture which motivates everybody and everything to be connected to each other in a very harmonious manner. Amanda J Montera projects ecotopia as:

This utopia, like its title, seems to be focused on environmental awareness. It's almost an odd juxtaposition of what seems to be an incredibly advanced society, and also one that functions questionably. What holds this society together? They live naturally, they're healthy, they hunt, they're intelligent, they get along, but they also have the war game. They don't domesticate animals, men and women are seemingly equal (women even having more of a presence in some ways), but they have a wild emotional abandon. They also seem to operate without a

heavy-handed government. It's a very interesting conglomerate of things about our current society that make up this one. (1)

Callenbach in the book *Ecotopia* fantasizes an ecologically aware society where men, women, and even animals are equal to each other in terms of their attachment with nature in the broadest sense of the term. Both nature and culture are symbiotically connected to each other for their holistic well-being.

Ecotopians embody the deep ecological awareness in their activities by rejecting the concept of modern industrialization and deploying ecologically sustainable perspectives. Eric Otto states, "Ecotopia narrates the concerns of deep ecology, then, as it presents the fundamental challenges of moving from an ecologically unsustainable and hegemonic economic structure to one that devalues economic expansion and works toward Snyder's true affluence" (69).

Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* has been reviewed by different scholars through ecological perspectives. Kristin Donner argues that the protagonist in *Into the Wild* displays deep ecological awareness throughout his adventure into the wilderness:

In his journey, Christopher McCandless displayed Naess and Session's two major characteristics of the Deep Ecology movement, self-realization, and biocentric equality. Chris struggles with his uptight family and lifestyle growing up. He wanted to experience living simply and emerge himself in nature. Session states, "the deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, and identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world" (144). Chris's movement begins with not wanting to get a new car. He does not want material things when his car works just fine. He then virtually erases his identity, gets rid of his money, and begins to become a member of

the "...biotic community" (145). He does not live as he dominates the earth, but rather he lives with all living things equally. (1-2)

Laurila Uoregon highlights similar attributes McCandless and transcendental writers such as Emerson and Thoreau depict in treating nonhuman world, especially the wilderness. Uoregon states that McCandless was interested in how these authors [Emerson, and Thoreau] wrote about their connection with nature. His trip to Alaska was driven by the transcendental spirit instilled in by such authors. At one point on his journey McCandless connects with this quote from, "Nature" by Emerson. "To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child" (qtd. in Uoregon, 2). Emerson's writing about nature was a huge inspiration for McCandless' spiritual journey. To quote Emerson, "In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me" (qtd. in Uoregon, 2).

Chrisopher X J. Jensen interprets *Into the Wild* in a bit different way from the critics I have incorporated in the preceding paragraphs, that is, Jensen not only talks about the importance of nature to humankind at the same time, he warns the humans not to reject the socio-cultural practices which are also necessary for running mundane life. Jensen states, "Krakauer depicts McCandless's frustration with modern civilization and yearning for the happiness of the wild. *Into the Wild* has-perhaps ironically-become a cult classic for those who still seek redemption in the wilderness"(3). Jensen goes on to justify his stance and articulates, "What is, of course, ironic about this view of wilderness is that it was the wilderness and McCandless' inability to eek out a living from it which led to his demise"(3).

A large part of the mythology which drove McCandless into the Alaskan wilderness centered around the idea that humans are mismatched to modern society, and that a man can be happy if he/she embarks on a journey out of society to live simply off the land. But McCandless' failure to thrive and survive during the most abundant season provided by his Alaskan paradise points out several problems with his romantic view of nature and oversimplified condemnation of modern society. The first is that society and the culture that it contains are the basis for survival wherever one chooses to live: whether you live in a dense urban center or a remote semi-pristine wilderness, survival requires obtaining the cultural knowledge and social connections needed to thrive in a particular environment.

Jon Nyman compares McCandless in *Into the Wild* and a transcendental author Henry David Thoreau in order to show the differences between these two individuals in terms of attitudes they project with regard to nature-culture relationship:

To McCandless, nature was a refuge, a means of getting away from society. Thoreau looks at nature and society in relation to each other whereas McCandless more or less views them as two separate planes of existence. Timothy Clark writes that "A fascination with the wild as the acultural or even anti-cultural pervades much environmental non-fiction. 'Wild' nature necessarily offers a space outside given cultural identities and modes of thinking and practice" (qtd. in Nyman, 24). This view of nature and the wild as something disconnected from culture, or even anti-cultural, seems to consort with that of McCandless.(24)

Nyman implicitly seems to disagree with the attitudes expressed by McCandless

towards mystifying 'nature' and demystifying 'culture' which is not good for humans and nonhuman communities. Instead, Nyman seems to suggest that you build a balanced perspective about 'nature' and 'culture' so as to create a good symbiosis between biotic and abiotic ecosystem.

A number of studies have been carried out to examine *Ecotopia* and *Into the Wild* with a view to understanding, and evaluating the nexus between Nature and human culture. No doubt, many scholars agree with the importance of symbiosis for the well-being of both natural world and human world. One of the more extreme polarities of utopian and dystopian representation appears in the relationship between nature and culture in depictions and interpretations of 'natural' environments. This polarized conflict between nature and culture has also been presented as to which is more important than the other in *Into the Wild*, and *Ecotopia*. In other words, some authors have paid much more attention either to 'nature' or to 'culture', thus resulting in a split between natural environment and human environment. In addition, some have seemed obsessed with the theory of 'Deep Ecology' to valorize nature while overlooking the socio-cultural aspects of humans. In some point in my literature review, some scholars have condemned the humans for creating ecological crisis across the globe and therefore have suggested the humans to reject materialistic life for elevation of human spirit. My concern here is, does this kind of one-sided school of thought give rise to solve the problem facing both human and non-human world? My argument is 'No'. I want to claim that foregrounding one aspect and marginalizing another one of human-nature world does not solve the problems facing biotic and abiotic communities in our local, regional, and in international levels. Therefore, a more balanced and a rather inclusive approach would be of understanding and implementing accordingly of the

interconnectedness between nature and culture.

This thesis contains four chapters. The first chapter states the overall plan of the research, offers operational definitions of key terms, states the research problem, formulates research questions, sets objectives, reviews relevant literature, establishes the research gap, spells out its key theoretical assumptions and sets its delimitations. The second chapter deal with Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and examines, analyzes and interprets the way nature as organic unity embodies both human and non-human world. Similarly, the third chapter is concerned with Krakauer's *Into the Wild* and examines and interprets in order to show how humans are symbiotically connected to nature's great "self". The final chapter restates the generalized and established ideas drawn from the analyses presented in the preceding chapters. It also recommends some future lines of research.

II. Nature as an Organic Unity in Callenbach's *Ecotopia*

In the modern Western view, nature is often seen as something outside the world of humans. This nature/non-nature dichotomy, however, is a delusion, as it overlooks the interdependency that is established through symbiotic relations in the community of nature. This dichotomous tendency has placed nature and culture in different positions-humans being placed at the center and the rest of the world at the periphery. As a matter of fact, humans have developed anthropocentric attitude towards nature. As a result the entire environment has suffered from disastrous repercussions. Therefore, a greater need is there to rethink our present situation and take up a decisive step further to bring a transformation in the present social order and reinvigorate the dormant agrarian ideals through the creation of a new ecological society.

People in Ecotopia embody different values which show Ecotopians's fundamental attachment to environmental and social stability within which variety can flourish. They value creativity. They ensure equality for women. They implement the protection and restoration of natural systems. They promote food production in their cities. Besides, Ecotopians treasure personal quality-of-life values, such as health and friendliness, and both meaningful discussion and play.

Ecotopians believe in the fact that human's well-being is dependent on the nature's unhindered well-being which is possible from a controlled human populace. Arne Naess and George Sessions have focused on the considerable decrease of the human population for the flourishing of human life. They argue, "The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease (50). "After secession, the Ecotopians adopted a formal national goal of declining population-

though only after long and bitter debate. It was widely agreed that *some* decline was needed, to lesson pressure on resources and other species and to improve the comfort and amenity of life” (61). Ecotopians have a provision for the punishment to the people having ecocidal habits and activities, “Deliberate pollution of water or air is punished by severe jail sentences” (86).

Excessive human population is an imposition on non-human world which in turn brings about environmental apocalypses resulting in human loss.

Ecotopian economy does not adopt the policy of “mere competition” in the name of fulfilling human’s headlong thirst. Instead, their economy is against capitalists’ practices which involve working as less as possible to take their modest place in a stable-state web of living organism. People in ecotopian society work as an interdependent member of a larger organic community. Paul W.Taylor’s biocentric outlook on nature supports this idea. Taylor argues, “Humans are thought of as members of the Earth’s community of life, holding that membership on the same terms as apply to all the nohuman members” (76).

Economic practice in Ecotopia is:

In economic terms, Ecotopia was forced to isolate its economy from the competition of harder-working peoples...mankind was not meant for production, as the 19th and early 20th centuries. Instead, humans were meant to take their modest place in a seamless, stable-state of living organisms, disturbing that web as little as possible....People were happy not to the extent they dominated their fellow creatures on the earth, but to the extent they lived in balance with nature. (43-44)

Ecotopian economy is not of competition but of just survival in which Ecotopian believe in sufficiency rather than abundance.

Ernest Callenbach in his utopian fiction *Ecotopia* creates a society in which there is a very harmonious relationship between man and nature. In this society, humans seem to be guided by eco-ethical belief for the sustenance of all life-forms. Eco-ethics or the environmental ethics is a way of reflecting sympathies, care and concerns for the natural world that may lead the humans to indulge in fruitful activities for the subsistence of all biotic as well as biotic component in the ecosphere thereby generating a symbiotic relationship between nature and culture. Ecotopians reflect their sympathies, care, love, and attachment for the nature in their thoughts, speeches, and activities. For ecotopians, “what matters most is the aspiration to live in balance with nature, “walk lightly on the land,” treat the earth as a mother” (29). This means that people in ecotopia treat the earth as an intimate member of their family. Callenbach illustrates that ecotopians have a good sense of ethics of respects for nature. He writes, “Ecotopians don’t pick flowers, preferring to enjoy them where they grow” (15). Ecotopians are aware of others’ existence too, when asked about what they thought of Ecotopia, one grizzled old man said that ecotopians are guided by the principle of “Live and let live” (5). Thus, it can be said that the eco-oriented people of Ecotopia are steadfastly following the eco-ethical beliefs for making the world around them move in a perfect harmony and consonance with the natural world without hurting and injuring it in the least.

Callenbach shows how symbiosis is advantageous to at least one of the dependent organism or thing. People in ecotopia are benefitted from the intimate association with nature in terms of food system, health, and the like:

Ecotopians eat better food than any nation on earth, because we grow it to be nutritious and taste good, not look good or pack efficiently. Our food suppliers are uncontaminated with herbicides and insecticides,

because we use cultivation for weeds and biological controls for insects. Our food preparation practices are sound, avoiding the processing that destroys food values. Most important of all, our agriculture has reached an almost totally stable state, with more than 99% of our wastes being recycled. In short, we have achieved a food system that can endure indefinitely. That is, if the level of foreign poisons dumped on our lands by rain and wind doesn't rise above the present inexcusable figures. (20)

Ecotopians look physically and mentally sound enough because of their attachment with the nature around them. William Weston, narrator of the fiction narrates, "From a physical-fitness point of view ordinary Ecotopian citizens are remarkably healthy-looking...Ecotopians are used to walking everywhere, carrying heavy burdens like backpacks and groceries for long distances, and they have a generally higher level of physical activity than Americans" (34). When Weston asked Ecotopians about the secrecy of their physical soundness, the reply Weston received was, "Well, nature has equipped us well, and we lead active physical lives" (34). This would imply that interconnectedness of humans with non-human world results in win-win position to both nature and culture.

Ecotopians entertain their minds and bodies from music, dance, and other arts. In addition, they spend most of their time in water or in trees. Almost everybody, particularly, young persons are found to be enjoying from original artistic activities. "There is hardly a young person in the whole country who does not either play an instrument, dance, act, sing, write, sculpt, paint, make video-films (133). Among all the arts, music seems the most important to Ecotopians. "Every farm, factory, or extended family has some kind of musical group, and those with professional status

usually begin in such places” (134). Ecotopians are fond of both modern and classical instruments. “There are also groups using classical instrumentation-violins, clarinets, flutes, and so on” (134). Ecotopians are almost as devoted to water as they are to trees, and rowing or sailing about in boats are favorite pastimes. “There is hardly an Ecotopian who doesn’t spend some of his time fishing, sailing, rowing, swimming, wading, or just looking at water” (87). Ecotopians seem to be very conscious about not to bore their physical and mental bodies only by being too much obsessed with headlong thirst. Instead, they have made original artistic activities as a regular and fundamental aspect of their lives so as to make them get connected to natural world.

People in Ecotopia treat nature as an important member of the earth’s community of life and work with collaboration as if natural aspects are their intimate friends. Paul W. Taylor in one of the components of biocentric outlook on nature argues, “Humans are thought of as members of the Earth’s community of life, holding that membership on the same terms as apply to all the nonhuman members” (76). The idea of collaboration between nature and culture is projected by Ecotopians when working with woods for the purpose of making houses “Of course the Ecotopian work on natural materials far more extensively and complexly than the Indians worked stone into arrowpoint, or hide into teepee. But they treat materials in the same spirit of respect, comradeship” (47). Earnest Callenbach further narrates:

The other day I stopped to watch some carpenters working on a building. They marked and sawed the wood lovingly(using their own muscle power, not our saws). Their nail patterns, I noticed, were beautifully placed, and their rhythm of hammering seemed patient, almost placid. When they raised wood pieces into place, they held them carefully, fitted them. They seemed almost to be collaborating with the

wood, rather than forcing it into the shape of a building. (47)

Ecotopians' perception and attitude towards natural aspects, particularly, woods is quite friendly. They are quite sensitive and careful not to hurt members of non-human community which shows that Ecotopians treat nature not as a sole material but as a living thing with mind, heart, and body.

Ecotopians believe in interdependency of members of both human and non-human world. However, they are equally dedicated to respecting and maintaining autonomy of each other. George Sessions and Arne Naess in their first basic principle to Deep Ecology maintain, "The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (49). Ecotopians believe that "the era of the great nation-states, with their promise of one ultimate world-state, fade away" (151). They further contend that some kind of separatism or autonomy is necessary for the complete well-being of each group member in a larger community of the human and non-human world. "Ecotopians argue that such separatism is desirable on ecological as well cultural grounds-that a small regional society can exploit its "niche" in the world biosystem more subtly and richly and efficiently than have the superpowers" (152). Ecotopian's advocacy or practice of separation of a certain group of people and/ or things from a larger body on the basis of group's inherent attributes and qualities prove the statement that different members of a larger world flourish and develop more freely than being embedded with each other.

Callenbach's ecotopian society comprehends the importance of the perception of interconnectedness that comes with ecological understanding, encouraging ecological wisdom at all stages of life. About Ecotopian school children, Weston

writes:

The experiences of the children are closely tied in with studies of plants, animals and landscape. I have been impressed with the knowledge that even young children have of such matters—a six-year-old can tell you all about the “ecological niches” of the creatures and plants he encounters in his daily life. He will also know what roots and berries are edible, how to use soap plant, how to carve a pot holder from a branch. (38-39)

Further, an Ecotopian ten-year-old knows “how hundreds of species of plants and animals live, both around their schools and in the areas they explore on backpacking expeditions” (130). Such knowledge, even in young children, would be taken for granted in an ecologically conscientious society. But traditional education takes for granted conservative pedagogical models which according to Bowers emphasize

the recovery (and rediscovery) of the intellectual achievements of the past”; “moral and spiritual growth; the ability to participate as an enfranchised citizen who bears both freedoms and responsibilities; and the intellectual foundations and skills necessary for earning a living” rather than the knowledge necessary to live with the environment. (37-38)

Just as ignorant of ecology is the liberal model of education, which focuses on “the progressive nature of social development,” individualism, and rational, linear thinking (Bowers 74-76). Perhaps Weston writes “ecological niches” within quotation marks because of his readers’ unfamiliarity with the term. To be sure, their Western education has not accounted for ecology in the same way the Ecotopians’ has. In fact,

Ecotopian adults can be heard saying, “Knowing yourself as an animal creature on the earth, as we do. It can feel more comfortable than [Weston’s] kind of life”(87) and “We don’t think in terms of ‘things,’ there’s no such thing as a thing—there are only systems” (88). Ecotopians thus emphasize ecological understanding and an essentially spiritual thinking rooted in, as the critic Jim Dwyer notes, “Native American and pagan cosmology,” which “inspires people to consider themselves intrinsic parts of nature and act accordingly”(76).

Callenbach’s ecotopia is eco-friendly in terms of economy, politics, and habitats. Ecotopians are the humans who seek to find their health and well-being in the lap of nature as Roszak et al. portrays ecologically aware people, “Ecological psychologists examine the human conscious and unconscious mind as an integral part of the web of nature, in which human health and well-being depend on a balanced mutual relationship with sustainable habitats, landscapes, and the planet as a whole” (357). Similar idea is expressed by ecotopians in which they claim how their society is better than post-industrialized society like America:

Our system is considerably cheaper than yours [America], if we add in all the costs. Many of your costs are ignored, or passed on through subterfuge to prosperity or the general public. We on the other hand must acknowledge all costs. Otherwise we could not hope to achieve the stable-state life systems which are fundamental ecological and political goal. (18)

It can be argued that in order to pursue a stable-state which is ecofriendly and politically correct, the authorities and all the concerned must strive to follow the policies which guarantee the motto like maximum achievement with minimum effort.

Ecotopians habitations are quite ecofriendly. Their furniture like artifacts are

more ecofriendly than Americans. Ernest Callenbach narrates this similar impression during his journey. Callenbach argues:

You seldom see any store-bought furniture in Ecotopian houses. They have mattress beds on bare floor, enormous barbaric beds built of heavy timbers as if for ancient Vikings; there are houses with no beds at all, only bedrolls brought out at night, Japanese style. But never a proper, ordinary bed, with frame, slats, springs, and an innerspring matters. (81)

Ecotopian people do not use furnitures produced by so-called advanced industries or companies. Rather, they use the raw materials directly from the natural sources which they find more comfortable and ecofriendly.

Ecotopian society treats nature not as a separate and subjugated part of ecosphere, but as an equal and in some cases more paramount than human world. Ecotopians seem to have firm belief that symbiosis between nature and culture becomes stronger only when women and men are treated equally or if necessary women being given more responsibilities and importance than men. New idea in the field of ecocriticism, called 'ecofeminism', also called 'ecological feminism' that examines the connections between women and nature can be an alternative worldview that values the earth as sacred, recognizes humanity's dependency on the natural world, and embraces all life as valuable. Ecotopian society has internalized the main tenets of ecofeminism in order to show the reverence for both nature and women:

Ecotopian life is strikingly equalitarian in general-women hold responsible jobs, receive equal pay, and of course they also control the Survivalist Party. The fact that they also exercise absolute control over their own bodies means that they openly exert a power which in other

societies [patriarchal societies] is covert or nonexistent: the right to select the fathers of their children. “No Ecotopian woman ever bears a child by a man she has not freely chosen. (64)

Ecotopian hardly base their daily activities on modern science and technology or even if they use, they make sure that science and technology is eco-friendly. “Ecotopians claim to have sifted through modern technology and rejected huge tracts of it, because of its ecological harmfulness” (38). However, despite this general technological austerity, they employ video devices even more extensively than we do. Feeling that they should transport their bodies only when it’s a pleasure, they seldom travel “on business” in our manner. Instead, they tend to transact business by using their picturephones. Ecotopians use technological devices such as TV to the extent that they have not been addicted to, “Ecotopians seem to use TV, rather than letting it use them” (38). Ecotopians take a childish delight in the windmills and rooftop wind-driven generators that are common in both cities and remote areas. “Ecotopian thinking has moved uniformly toward power sources which, like solar energy, earth heat, tides, and wind, can be tapped indefinitely without affecting even the local biosphere” (103). In this society, people use natural, renewable and bio-degradable products such as wood, clay, bio-degradable plastics, etc. but even for getting wood trees are cut in a more respectable and harmless ways. The people in ecotopia are bound by some ethical purview and a proper limit is set for the use of the things derived from nature. “Wood is a major factor in the topsy-turvy Ecotopian economy, as the source not only of lumber and paper but also of some of the remarkable plastics that Ecotopian scientists have developed. Ecotopians in the city and the country alike take a deep and lasting interest in wood. They love to smell it, feel it, carve it, polish it” (55).

Callenbach illustrates the restoration of urban rivers and regeneration of urban commons. These rivers, which “had earlier, at great expense, been put into huge culverts underground, as is usual in cities, the Ecotopian spent even more to bring them up to ground. Living trees and creeks run along the main street of the capital” (12). The country is an organic recycling based sustainable society; there the problem of mass disposal from mass production in the industrial society is cleared. Therefore a large scale sewer system is no longer necessary.

In Ecotopia, people have even discarded all of their ecocidal habits and activities in order to reincorporate a purer form of Nature into the lives of the humans that is no longer intruded upon by the cultured Man and have developed new techniques that work in accordance with the laws of Nature. So in a way Ecotopians have created a ‘green’ society for themselves which could be described as “a society consisting of small-scale units, where people live their lives close to nature and to each other, where technology was of the proper scale e.g. ‘adapted’ to its social and cultural context” (qtd. in Spaargaren 42). People in Ecotopia are meant to take their modest place in a seamless, stable-state web of living organisms, disturbing that web as little as possible. This would mean sacrifice of present consumption, but it would ensure future survival-which became an almost religious objective, perhaps akin to earlier doctrines of “salvation”. Ecotopians are happy because they have learned how to live in consonance with nature. “People were to be happy not to the extent they dominated their fellow creatures on the earth, but to the extent they lived in balance with them” (44).

Ecotopian education system is ecofriendly. “Ecotopian schools look more like farms than anything else” (116). Typical Ecotopian school is built and operated in very close association with natural world. One Ecotopian school is portrayed as

follows:

Crick School is situated on the outskirts of the minicity of Reliez and its 125 students trudge out to the country every day. The school owns eight acres, including a woodlot and a creek. There is not a single permanent building of any significance; instead, classes take place either outdoors or in small, temporary-seeming wood buildings barely big enough to hold a teacher and 10 pupils, which are scattered here and there on the school grounds. (116)

Children in Ecotopia are taught about how to run their life practically which is closely attached with nature. An Ecotopian child knows how to “construct a shelter; how to grow, catch, and cook food; how to make simple clothes; how hundreds of species of plants and animals live, both around their schools and in the areas they explore on backpacking expedition” (120).

In Ecotopia, people are eco-conscious who have furthered the cause of a new society based purely upon the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity who move constantly along with nature without any intrusion into the activities of both animate and inanimate world of ecological beings. In the novel, it has also been shown how one can live adequately, self-sufficiently and comfortably even without all the material comforts of a luxurious life. For example, the people in the land of Ecotopia are not so crazy to build their homes or farms-houses in a sophisticated and first-class manner:

There were now more houses though rather scattered-many ofm them seeming to be small farms. The orchards, fields and fences looked healthy and surprisingly well cared for, almost like those of Western Europe. Yet how dingy and unprosperous the farm buildings looked,

compared to the white-painted farms of Iowa or New England! The Ecotopians must be positively allergic to paint. They build with rock, adobe, weathered boards-apparently almost anything that comes to hand, and they lack the aesthetic sense that would lead them to give such materials a coat of concealing paint. They would rather cover a house with vines or bushes than paint it. (9)

Callenbach gives his conclusive opinions about Ecotopia in a compact manner, “Ecotopian air and water are everywhere crystal clear. The land is well cared for and productive. Food is plentiful, wholesome, and recognizable. All life systems are operating on a stable-state basis, and can go on doing so indefinitely” (150).

Callenbach seems to incorporate the two disparate philosophies, namely “libertarianism” and “ecology” whose respective concerns are quite different. While libertarianism is solely concerned with the human individual, the ecological philosophy concentrates on non-human world as its sole concern. The novelist blends these two ideological beliefs throughout the novel. Both nature and culture have been considered as valuable entities in their own right. In the novel, both these entities are shown to be contributing significantly to containing symbiosis between human and non-human world. There is a direct and coherent relationship between the humans and Nature. The nature has never been intruded by the human beings and is left to itself to flourish and grow in its soulful vivacity.

III. Searching Individual Self with Nature's 'Self': Seeking Identity and Happiness in Unity

The novel *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer tells the true story of a young man named Chris McCandless who decides to leave culture-human world behind in exchange for the refreshing rawness of the Alaskan wilderness. Just out of college and a member of a well-off family, Chris decides to completely renounce the lifestyle of materialism he grows up surrounded by and welcome simplicity and solidarity as his new best friends. For Chris, society's practices and values are shallow and meaningless. He is not driven by materialistic desire but is guided by an impulse to be in a natural state of life. Krakauer seems to infer that there is an interconnection between nature and culture, although the latter has come to be ever more detached from the former; something that is visible in the emerging capitalist economy, social injustice, and people's lack of interest in nature (apart from its monetary values). Jon Krakauer tends to urge people to awaken and realize the symbiotic relationship between humans and non-human world in much the same way as Thoreau urges people to awaken and see, "The morning wind forever blows, but few are the ears that hear it" (134). It can be inferred from this statement that nature is always present and that it is the root of all life; including that which exists within society and culture, but a lot of people seem to have forgotten that-maybe because they get distracted by the chance of procuring monetary wealth. However, it should also be noted that Krakauer does not provoke people to completely ignore culture and indulge only in natural world which often proves chaotic in human life as in McCandless' in *Into the Wild*.

Human's identity is intimately attached with nature; human's identity and existence is not imaginable devoid of non-human world. To be a real human, there must be the unity between individual's "self" and nature's "self". With regard to real

“self” Devall and Sessions argue:

Real selfhood, it is claimed, derives from human unity with nature, realizing our nature personhood and uniqueness with all other human and nonhuman forms of being. Humanity must be “naturalized”; that is, the “human self” is not an atomistic ego, but a species-being and a Nature-being as a self-in-self, “where Self stands for organic wholeness. Here, the essence of Nature, to a large extent, would appear to be a projection of an idealized humanity onto the natural world. Nature is “humanized”...rocks, bacteria, trees, clouds, river systems, animals-and permits the realization of their inner essence. (68)

Human’s self receives its wholeness and complete meaning in conjunction with nature’s “Self”. This real selfhood never dies; it is a continuous process.

Chris McCandless in *Into the Wild* leaves his human society and goes to the wilderness in Alaska where he finally dies. His death is a symbol of mixing human’s self with the nature’s self. After all, every living being and thing is an interdependent part of whole nature. In this sense, nature should be perceived as an organic unity. All living and non-living beings are one in this entire cosmos. In the search for truth that complete self-realization necessitates, one discovers, according to Naess that “in the last analysis, all living beings are one” (29) and therefore individual hostility towards other living beings is necessarily reduced. As Naess further explained in relation to Gandhi’s ideal of self-realization and identification with every living being:

For deep ecology, the study of our place in the Earth household includes the study of ourselves as part of the organic whole...[T]he search for deep ecological consciousness is the search for a more objective consciousness and state of being through an active deep

questioning and meditative process and way of life. ... From this... characteristic of deep ecological consciousness, Arne Naess has developed two ultimate norms...*self-realization* and *biocentric equality*. (66)

This deep ecology form of self-realization is further described as unfolding what Devall & Sessions maintain, “the ‘self’ in relation to the greater ‘Self’ of organic wholeness; and biocentric equality is a recognition of the inherent right of all things in the biosphere to live and flourish” (67).

Human’s social, psychological, and physical aspect is always connected to the entire universe as one of the integral parts. Manuel Deland describes the universe as:

A contingent accumulation of layers or strata that may differ in complexity but that coexists and interacts with each other in no particular order: a biological entity may interact with a sub-atomic one, as when neurons manipulate concentrations of metallic ions, or a psychological entity interacts with a chemical one, as when subjective experience is modified by a drug. (as cited in Adam, 93)

McCandless realizes the importance of human’s contact with nature. He argues that humans are the parts of the nature; they cannot be separated from nature and natural aspects of any kind. He posits “Think of our life in nature, daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,-rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The actual world! The common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we” (114). To interpret this, McCandless examines the integration of psychological, social, and ecological domains. The constitution of an individual personality establishes itself at the crossroads of multiple components, each relatively autonomous in relation to the other.

McCandless wrote a two pages letter when he was writhing with life and death. In the letter he expressed his happiness that he felt as if he was reborn. “Yes,” wrote McCandless and, two pages letter, “Conscious of food. Eat and cook with concentration...Holy Food.”On the back pages of the book that served as his journal, he declared: “I am reborn. This is my dawn. Real life has just begun” (111). This would mean that the real self emerges only after the co-participation of human and nature. For this, these two should be merged as one. Culture begins to take its shape as a culture when people realize their surrounding/nature. To be cultured means to be “naturalized”.

Research studies show that connections with nature are linked to happiness and ecological sustainability. Human deviation from nature is deviation from happiness. Therefore, attachment with nature for true happiness is inevitable. In other words, our connections with nature could be the best medicine for people of all ages- improving our health, happiness, and well-being. Those same connections could also heal the planet.

Joanne Vining et al. conducted two studies in order to verify the hypothesis if there is a link between nature and happiness. The results of their research suggest that “nature relatedness has a distinct happiness benefit” (23). beyond the more generalized benefit of feeling connected to family, friends, and home.

Jon Krakauer argues that human happiness is not possible only from human world including relationships, friends, sports, partying, vacations, work, education, money, possessions, and status, etc. It is symbiotically connected to nature and culture. Jon Krakauer narrates one event about McCandless, an adventurer in which Krakauer shows that man’s real happiness resides in the lap of nature, not with his human company. “McCandless was thrilled to be on his way north, and he was

relieved as well-relieved that he had again evaded the impending threat of human intimacy, of friendship, and all the messy emotional baggage that comes with it. He had fled the claustrophobic confines of his family”(35). McCandless can be taken as a representative of humans who have suffered from this world of all comforts and materials, and therefore have strived a lot to get rid of this perilous human world. Thoreau in his book *Walden* posits that human can only realize the real values of his life in the close relationship with nature. “If the day and night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance like flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, more starry, more immortal,-that is your success. All nature is your congratulation, and you have cause momentarily to bless yourself” (qtd. in Krakauer 30). Human life becomes sweet, successful, and blissful only when he accepts nature around him with great reverence. McCandless shares Thoreau’s opinions during his adventurous journey to Alaskan wilderness by writing a letter to a friend, urging him to try living a life on the road:

You are wrong if you think Joy emanates only or principally from human relationships. God has placed it all around us. It is in everything and anything we might experience. We just have to have the courage to turn against our habitual lifestyle and engage in unconventional living.
(37)

McCandless wanted to elevate his spirit by leading a simple life close to nature. In the following passage, McCandless’ college education instantiates the tedious obligations of his life; a life which he was not quite content with:

The trip was to be an odyssey in the fullest sense of the word, an epic journey that would change everything. He had spent the previous four years, as he saw it, preparing to fulfill an absurd and onerous duty; to

graduate from college. At long last he was unencumbered, emancipated from the stifling world of his parents and peers, a world of abstraction and security material excess, a world in which he felt grievously cut off from the raw throb of existence. (14)

In addition, Jon Krakauer narrates about how much time McCandless spent in the wilderness, what he felt like being only in the lap of nature, and finally how he achieved a real freedom McCandless had been supposedly searching for. Krakauer writes:

Two years he walks the earth, no phone, no pool, no pets, and no cigarettes. Ultimate freedom. Anaesthetic voyage whose home is the road. Escaped from Atlanta. Thou shalt no return 'cause "the west is the best." And now after two rambling year comes the final and greatest adventure. The climatic battle to kill the false being within and victoriously conclude the spiritual revolution. Ten days and nights of freight trains and hitchhiking bring him to the great white north. No longer to be poisoned by civilization he feels, and walks alone upon the land to become lost in the wild. (108)

This would imply that real freedom, and true being cannot be realized in this so-called human civilization full of science and technological advancement; rather one can feel and taste the true freedom and spiritual revelation only after having immersed in the wilderness.

In his journey, McCandless displays Arne Naess and George Sessions' one major characteristics of the Deep Ecological movement, biocentric equality. Sessions states, "The deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, and identification which goes beyond humanity to include the non-human world" (144).

Chris begins to reject his cultural identification and tries to become a part of nature, “He virtually erases his identity, gets rid of his money, and begins to become a member of the biotic community” (145). Chris does not live as if he dominates the earth, but rather he lives with all living things equally. Although Chris does not want to dominate other species, when he is in Alaska he has to use the land to live. He kills animals to eat, uses wood for fire, and also eats plants. He is still following the biocentric equality characteristic because Session states, “mutual predation is a biological fact of life” (145). Many of the symbiotic relations are based on the acquisition of food. As a rudimentary illustration of these relations, Aldo Leopold describes the “biotic pyramid” (42). So, it is okay for species to use each other to live and survive. Chris too follows symbiotic principal for his survival in the wilderness.

Happiness is derived from intimate relationship with nature. After all, human beings are surrounded by nature. To elucidate this, Vining et al, argues, “Nature is surrounding us. Trees, animals, the environment outside, etc...But within all of the animals, and the plants we as humans make up the environment as well; we are a vital part of nature” (5). McCandless claims that he has achieved what he had been longing for:

I have lived through much, and now I think I have found what is needed for happiness. A quiet secluded life in the country, with the possibility of being useful to people to whom it is easy to do good, and who are not accustomed to have it done to them; then work which one hopes may be of some use; then rest, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbor-such is my idea of happiness. And then, on top of all that, you for a mate, and children, perhaps-what more can the heart of a man desire? (112)

What can be inferred from the above passage is that being in intimate relationship with nature teaches humans to live for each other respecting the intrinsic values which is a good to maintain harmony in the ecosystem.

All living and nonliving things and being of nature-plants, animals, humans, rocks, lands and the like –are coequal and interdependent parts of a whole. No creature or thing of the nature is superior or inferior. Each has its uniqueness, identity and significance to keep things whole. Taylor discusses the holistic view of Earth’s ecological system, “The ecological relationship between any community of living things and their environment form an organic whole of functionally interdependent part...its significance for the humans is the same as its significance for no-humans” (78). Krakauer internalizes human dignity only with attachment with non-human world. This symbiotic internalization is projected in Chris when he narrates, “Think of our life in nature,-daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it,-rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks, animals! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?” (114). Human identification is interconnected to natural world, but then human beings in this post modern age seem to have forgotten their connectivity with nature.

Jon Krakauer embodies his ecological imagination in his characters and setting in *Into the Wild* by deliberately talking about the importance of wilderness in human life:

I wished to acquire the simplicity, native feelings, and virtues of savage life; to divest myself of the factitious habits, prejudices and imperfections of civilization;...and to find, amidst the solitude and grandeur of the western wilds, more correct views of human nature and of the true interests of man. The season of snows was preferred that I

might experience the pleasure of suffering and the novelty of danger.

(104)

Krakauer argues that wilderness or nature is the only way of elevating human being's spirit from being contaminated by human tradition and practices. For this, humans must accept the wilderness as the core part of their life. This kind of mental image seems to be projected in Chris when he reaches one of the places in Alaskan wilderness:

Wilderness appealed to those bored or disgusted with man and his works. It not only offered from society but also was an ideal stage for the Romantic individual to exercise the cult that he frequently made of his own soul. The solitude and total freedom of the wilderness created a perfect setting for either melancholy or exultation. (104)

McCandless thinks of society as a hindrance to his desired way of living, and that the life he wants is to be achieved through a simple existence in nature, away from the distractions of society. McCandless views on nature are not as apparent and evident as those of Thoreau though. This is due to a difference in incentives and purpose between the two individuals. Muir, Thoreau and McCandless went into the wild for different reasons. Krakauer puts it like this:

Unlike Muir and Thoreau, McCandless went into the wilderness not primarily to ponder nature or the world at large but, rather, to explore the inner country of his own soul. He soon discovered, however, what Muir and Thoreau already knew: An extended stay in the wilderness inevitably directs one's attention outwards as much as inward and it is impossible to live off the land without developing both a subtle understanding of, and a strong emotional bond with, that land and all it

holds. (121)

Krakauer compares McCandless to Everett Ruess, another vagabond that traveled through the wilderness of the southern United States in the 1930's, "One is struck by Ruess's craving for connection with the natural world and by his almost incendiary passion for the country through which he walked." (91). "I had some terrific experiences in the wilderness since I wrote you last-overpowering, overwhelming," Ruess gushed to his friend Cornel Tengel. "But then I am always being overwhelmed. I require it to sustain my life"(91). Much like Ruess, McCandless went into the wild to be overwhelmed, to test his limits. Both Ruess and McCandless claimed that the experiences that the wilderness had to offer, often dangerous ones, are in one way or another a necessity of life. McCandless wrote in his journal, "It is the experiences, the memories, the great triumphant joy of living to the fullest extent in which real meaning is found" (37).

To be able to really live, both Ruess and McCandless seem to think that extraordinary experiences and the testing of one's limits is needed. This kind of extraordinary living, in close relation with nature, would help open one's eyes to the real values in life.

Obsessions can become extremely distressing and debilitating, having negative impacts on relationships functioning. This would imply that when someone is obsessed with somebody or something, they are often in a position to reject other sides of their life which may be necessary for them to survive and exist in their world. Simply put, people with obsession fail to maintain the required relationship with all biotic and abiotic (including humans) communities resulting in adverse effects in their life. McCandless in *Into the Wild* shows a kind of obsession with natural world, the wilderness by rejecting human-world and foregrounding nature. The result is:

McCandless dies in a very shocking way. I argue that Chris's shocking death in the wilderness is a result of collision between nature and culture. Inquiry into the symbiotic relationship between nature and culture can reduce this collision course between human and non-human world.

Opinions vary greatly on McCandless' life and eventual fate. In one hand, many people expressed that McCandless essentially "got what he deserved" for failing to educate himself about and respect the power of nature. On the other hand are those who revere McCandless for his visionary travels and his attempts to get back in touch with nature. My interest in McCandless is part psychological, part socio-cultural, and part ecological.

Psychologically I find McCandless fascinating. Krakauer's book does a fabulous job of connecting McCandless' inspiration and worldview to the writings of Tolstoy, Jack London, and Henry David Thoreau. What these writers hold in common is mistrust for society and a vision that humans are happiest when they return to nature. In the works of these writers, wild places are a kind of sanctuary from the baser and meaningless pursuits of civilization: nature is where a man can find himself and be truly happy. This view of nature echoes the central tenets of evolutionary psychology, which suggest among other things that humans have evolved and therefore are best matched to live in wild ecosystems. Krakauer depicts McCandless' frustration with modern civilization and his yearning for the happiness of the wild. *Into the Wild* has — perhaps ironically — become a cult classic for those who still seek redemption in the wilderness.

What is, of course, ironic about this view of wilderness is that it was the wilderness and McCandless' inability to seek out a living from it which led to his demise. This reality frames my socio-cultural interest in *Into the Wild*. A large part of

the mythology which drove McCandless into the Alaskan wilderness centered around the idea that humans are mismatched to modern society, and that a man can be happy if he embarks on a journey out of society to live simply off the land. But McCandless' failure to thrive and survive during the most abundant season provided by his Alaskan paradise points out several problems with his romantic view of nature and oversimplified condemnation of modern society. The first is that society and the culture that it contains are the basis for survival wherever one chooses to live: whether you live in a dense urban center or a remote semi-pristine wilderness, survival requires obtaining the cultural knowledge and social connections needed to thrive in a particular environment. Like many explorers before him who left modern civilization behind in favor of a life in the wild, McCandless arrogantly assumed that he could figure out (perhaps with the aid of a couple of botany books) how to live off of the land. As it turns out, it takes a very deep cultural knowledge to do so; it probably also helps to work cooperatively in a small group of other humans. McCandless' fundamental distaste for both technological culture and human social communities led him to his own demise. The myth that we can easily survive on the land without the aid of each other or cultural technology is mistaken.

This leads me to the final and perhaps most interesting element of *Into the Wild*: the view it provides of the current state of our ecosystems and our relation to them. Krakauer makes the point that McCandless actually had to work fairly hard to achieve the wilderness experience he desired, because even in the rather remote area of Alaska he chose to venture into the influence of modern civilization is fairly inescapable. For example, according to Krakauer, McCandless had to conspicuously avoid the use of maps, because a map of the area would have revealed the many resources provided by modern society within only a few miles of his encampment.

Back in 1992 McCandless seemed to intuit what ecologists now generally agree is true: there is no more wilderness, as every ecosystem has been profoundly impacted by the activities of human civilizations. Although it is not entirely clear that McCandless died because there was not enough food available to him (he may just have been ignorant of the food that was there), *Into the Wild* suggests that human impacts may have rendered even the most remote areas unsuitable for subsistence. In our success — most of which has been driven by the ability to domesticate nature via agriculture — we have made it almost impossible to return to living solely off of untended ecosystems. It would be foolish to take McCandless' solitary story as proof that subsistence living off of untended ecosystems is mostly impossible, but the story is paradigmatic of what might be a larger reality.

I tend to think that humans are so fundamentally cultural and cooperative that errands of the kind undertaken by McCandless are inherently foolish. *Into the Wild* tells a story that provides anecdotal support for that contention. But like Krakauer I cannot simply boil down Christopher McCandless' story to one of foolhardy ignorance and hubris: like McCandless, I am curious about whether human beings still retain the ability to walk into the wilderness and survive without the support of material culture and society of modern civilization.

It is clear that McCandless in *Into the Wild* has projected two different kinds of relationship with regard to Nature and Culture. In one hand, he has contemplated the symbiosis between nature and culture which is quite advantageous, especially to human beings. McCandless can be taken as a representative of human world which is dominated and guided by anthropocentricism whereby non-human world has been perceived as a means of fulfilling humans' headlong materialistic thirst in today's world. McCandless is discontent with some aspects of the society in which he lives,

and cherishes nature and the freedom that it connotes to him. McCandless leaves his civilized society and goes into the wild with an aim to elevating his life. To him, nature and wilderness is about extraordinary experiences and ultimate freedom. Freedom from a constraining culture that expects him to do what is considered normal, or the right thing to do. McCandless wants to leave the beaten track and live the life the way he wants. McCandless turns to nature and its simplicity in this pursuit.

On the other hand, in the name of elevating his self in the lap of nature, McCandless devalues human-world which is an important part of symbiosis between nature and culture. McCandless's negative attitude towards culture and his activities accordingly results in a fatal consequence in his life. His obsession with the nature and the wilderness finally leads him to his shocking death. This doleful consequence in McCandless's life in particular and in his familial and social life in general signifies a failure to understand the importance of symbiotic relationship between nature and culture. A judicious insight into the symbiosis between human and non-human world can be an alternative to solve the problems caused due to collision between nature and culture followers.

IV. Symbiosis between Nature and Culture: The Well-being of Biotic and Abiotic Community

The importance of symbiosis between nature and culture has been a much discussed literature in ecocritical interpretations of texts since 1990's among ecologists, environmentalists, human psychologists, and the like. My dissertation is primarily about significance of symbiotic relationship between human and non-human world. My argument has been that judicious symbiosis between nature and culture is good for both human kind and nature. The tendency to conceptualize nature and culture as dichotomous has resulted in detrimental consequences to both biotic and abiotic communities. In order to substantiate my argument, Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), and Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (1996) have been chosen as the primary literary texts. For the purpose of theoretical/ conceptual framework, the following ideas are utilized in this study: Barbara Paterson's concept of "symbiosis", A. N. Whitehead's "nature as organism", Lawrence Buell's "biocentrism", and Arne Naess's "deep ecology". The main objective of this dissertation has been to examine the symbiotic relationship between Nature and Humans articulated in *Ecotopia* and *Into the Wild*. In one hand, human characters in the books *Ecotopia* and *Into the Wild* have suffered a lot simply by having too much obsession either with the wilderness/nature or with culture. On the other hand, ecosystem has been disturbed by human's anthro-urbo-techno-centric domination over nature.

Callenbach eloquently displays a very harmonious relationship between people in Ecotopian society and non-human world. The citizens of Ecotopia share a common aim: they seek a balance between themselves and nature. They were "literally sick of bad air, chemicalized food, and lunatic advertising. They turned to

politics because it was finally the only route to self-preservation. In the mid-20th century as “firms grew in size and complexity citizens needed to know the market would still serve the interests of those for whom it claimed to exist.

Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* targets the fact that many people did not feel that the market or the government were serving them in the way they wanted them to. This book could be interpreted as a protest against consumerism and materialism, among other aspects of American life.

The values embodied by those Ecotopians depicted in the novel reflect the values espoused by its author. Callenbach said that his Ecotopians attach fundamental importance to environmental and social stability within which variety can flourish. They value creativity. They ensure equality for women. They implement the protection and restoration of natural systems. They promote food production in their cities. As well, they treasure personal quality-of-life values, such as health and friendliness, and both meaningful discussion and play. Callenbach’s concept does not reject technology as long as it does not interfere with the Ecotopian social order and serves the overall objectives. Members of his fictional society prefer to demonstrate a *conscious selectivity* toward technology, so that not only human health and sanity might be preserved, but also social and ecological wellbeing. The values embodied by those Ecotopians depicted in the novel reflect the values espoused by its author. Callenbach said that his Ecotopians attach fundamental importance to environmental and social stability within which variety can flourish. They value creativity. They ensure equality for women. They implement the protection and restoration of natural systems. They promote food production in their cities. As well, they treasure personal quality-of-life values, such as health and friendliness, and both meaningful discussion and play.

Jon Krakauer *Into the Wild* chronicles the adventures and eventual demise of Christopher McCandless, a young man who reinvents himself as “Alexander Supertramp” and spends two years wandering the United States before embarking on a final trip into the Alaskan wilderness.

McCandless in *Into the Wild* experiments with dropping out of society, and part of this experiment is to see if he can live on his own unaided along a section of Alaska’s Stampede Trail. He survives for over 100 days supplied with only basic outdoor gear, a few pound of rice, and a low caliber rifle before eventually succumbing to starvation and to his demise. McCandless death in the wilderness suggests that he rejects cultural aspect of human life in the name of getting ecstasy and total freedom exclusive to nature. Tendency to reject one and embrace another one has led to McCandless to his own death. Therefore, it’s a high time for human beings to realize the consequences of such dichotomous relationship between nature and culture. Survival depends upon harmony, co-operation and co-participation not only among humans, but also among all beings and things. The deep internalization and wise practical implementation of this kind of thought helps in maintaining symbiosis between human and non-human world.

Nowadays, we are beginning to see nature and culture as intertwined once again. Today, we could assert that the dichotomy between nature and culture does not exist anymore. These entities are not separated; there is an interrelation between them. Our environment only assumes a truthful meaning when it can relate to us and vice-versa, it is an interdependency relation. Well-being of both biotic (including humans) and abiotic communities depend upon the reciprocal and symbiotic relationship between nature and culture. Therefore, as we could see, we should not conceive the world as being divided anymore, as being separated between these two ontological

instances, one natural (land, water, forests, and so forth) and the other cultural (human beings, society, cities, and so forth). The world is a historical and geographical process of constant and endless metabolism (not merely biological, however), truly an open system. In this system, the social and the natural aspects of reality contribute to produce a socio-natural outcome where different kinds of components exist together. Every aspect of life is represented in terms of chemical, physical, social, economic, political, and cultural processes. All these processes are absolutely indivisible and cannot be separated from one another.

The findings of this study can be used by research scholars, policy makers, curriculum designers, students, and teachers and the like who are primarily concerned with the importance of symbiosis between nature and culture and the positive impacts it will have on both biotic and abiotic world. However, the results this dissertation come up with should not be taken in a very comprehensive way as it interprets the data drawn primarily from only two texts namely, *Ecotopia* and *Into the Wild*. For the researcher, the study will help them uncover critical areas in the educational and/or in research activities process that many researchers were not able to explore.

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