

Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston Study Guide

Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston by Ernest Callenbach

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Plot Summary

Earnest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* is a small country made up of what used to be Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. The story takes place in 1999, which is twenty-five years after it was written, in 1974. In the story, *Ecotopia* has been an independent nation for nineteen years, and most Americans, including the United States government, still do not know much of anything about their northwestern neighbor. The *Ecotopians* are secretive and cut off from their American counterparts and this has bred hostility from many on both sides of the border. The *Times-Post* of New York, with the approval of the president of the United States, sends William Weston, an internal affairs reporter, to *Ecotopia* to write a story explaining what is going on in *Ecotopia*. This book is structured as a collection of reports sent to the *Times-Post* for his story and entries from his personal diary.

When Weston sets out for *Ecotopia*, he talks to some Americans about their opinions of *Ecotopia*. Everyone he talks to expresses either a fear or mistrust, or both feelings towards the *Ecotopians*. One even goes so far as to tell Weston that they are all cannibals, and that Weston is dooming himself to be someone's dinner by going to *Ecotopia*! Upon crossing the *Ecotopian* border, Weston finds that the *Ecotopians* do not exactly hold a very high opinion of Americans either. *Ecotopians* feel that the people of the United States are all wasteful, barbaric, and prejudiced.

Over the course of six weeks, Weston come learns many things about *Ecotopia*, some of which are amazing while others are downright ridiculous. He makes several friends who lead him on an interesting and enlightening cultural adventure. He gets involved with a woman named Marissa Brightcloud, and over the course of his stay in *Ecotopia*, falls in love with her.

As the assignment draws to a close and his time to return to New York approaches, Weston begins to realize that he has changed. He begins to see himself more as an *Ecotopian* than an American and sees life from the same perspective. As he reads over his columns, and looks back at his life, he realizes just how much he really has changed, as well as how much he loves both Marissa and *Ecotopia*. As the story draws to a close, Weston decides that he will stay in *Ecotopia* with Marissa. He sends his boss in New York his last column, his journal, and a note explaining his decision.



Page 1-16

Page 1-16 Summary

WILLIAM WESTON ON HIS JOURNEY TO ECOTOPIA

Washington, Oregon, and Northern California break away from the United States and form their own nation called Ecotopia. For 19 years, Ecotopia remains a mystery to the American people. Many myths and rumors exist about the people of Ecotopia and how they live, but there are no real concrete facts. The American government realizes that they must acknowledge the fact that Ecotopia is probably here to stay, and so they must negotiate foreign relations with them. William Weston is an international affairs reporter. He is sent openly by the Times-Post, as well as secretly by the American government into Ecotopia to gain whatever information he can.

Weston explains the fact that several other countries around the world are following the example of Ecotopia and are splitting into smaller countries. He also mentions that many others tried and failed to mimic the success of Ecotopia.

CROSSING THE ECOTOPIAN BORDER

Weston lands in Reno. The Ecotopians do not allow any international flights to go over their airspace, so he has to land in Reno and take a train to San Francisco. After being hassled about the internal combustion engine in the taxi, Weston and his driver are allowed to cross the border with little trouble. Weston gets on a train for San Francisco. The train runs on magnetic rails, and not a combustion engine. The train is full of greenery, and the people are all lounging about. Weston meets some skiers on the train and he talks to them about the train and the plants, which he does not recognize. As this column ends, Weston arrives in San Francisco.

THE STREETS OF ECOTOPIA'S CAPITAL

In this column, Weston explores the city of San Francisco. The formerly large street, Market Street, is now only two lanes, and has a creek running down the center of it. The only cars here are electric cars, and most people ride bicycles or walk. They also have automated electric trolleys without drivers that provide free public transportation. The skyscrapers have been turned into apartments and now have catwalks strung between them. Weston buys some new clothes and finds that the Ecotopians do not use any more synthetic materials than they have to. The streets are crowded, but not with the density one would expect. The majority of the road is "sidewalk" and the potholes are filled in with flowers as soon as they open. The room that Weston gets is nice but a little old fashioned. However he describes the bed as atrocious.



Page 1-16 Analysis

WILLIAM WESTON ON HIS JOURNEY TO ECOTOPIA

The introductory announcement, which is structured as an ad for either a newspaper or a magazine, introduces William Weston and his upcoming assignment to Ecotopia. It also informs the reader of a hostility which exists between the Ecotopians and the Americans.

The next section is an entry in Weston's diary. The style changes here. As an entry in a diary, this section is far more personal, and is told in the first person. Here Weston shows that he is glad to finally be on the way, and he hints that this assignment has been in the works for at least a year. While the diary entry does provide some good background information, it is primarily to help give more life to the character.

"William Weston on His Journey to Ecotopia" begins with Weston on a plane on his way to Ecotopia. Weston writes his column during the flight. These entries are very similar to his diary entries, but a little less personal and speculative, as they are intended for public reading. He takes the time here to explain the origins of Ecotopia, and to tell of some other countries that tried to follow Ecotopia. He describes food shortages after Ecotopia breaks away from the United States.

CROSSING THE ECOTOPIAN BORDER

In his second diary entry, Weston describes Reno as "a sad shadow of its former good-time self" (pg. 4). He says that without the gambling business from California, the town has dried up. Weston spends a little time outside the terminal asking the people their opinions of Ecotopia. Most people at least pretend indifference, but most of them are at least uneasy about Ecotopia. Some are openly hostile to them. Weston has trouble finding someone to take him across the border. Finally he convinces a man to take him. The driver charges him double fare and a 25% tip, calling the Ecotopians cannibals and tells Weston that he will probably not make it out alive.

Weston meets his first Ecotopians. The soldiers seem friendly enough to Weston, and the people he meets on the train are both friendly and helpful. While talking to the people on the train, Weston sees the Ecotopian love for nature and concern for the environment. The Ecotopians are a very emotionally expressive people. On the train, Weston sees several arguments and shouting matches, but no actual violence.

In his next diary entry, Weston describes the Ecotopians as almost Dickensian. They are odd looking, but not crazy looking, like the hippies from the sixties. He says that people seem to be very loose and playful with each other, and that he wonders what might happen if he maintains eye contact with any of the women who openly stare him in the eye on the street. The streets of Ecotopia are full of openly expressed and strong emotion, but free of the threat of criminal actions or violence. Weston feels that while there may be some dangerous ones among the group, most of the Ecotopians are harmless. He ends this entry with the hopes that he can preserve his own sanity.



THE STREETS OF ECOTOPIA'S CAPITAL

The people of San Francisco, who do not drive cars, have converted most of the streets into sidewalks and bike trails and parks. Due to the damage done by a large earthquake nine years ago that destroyed many three-story buildings, most of the Ecotopians live in the skyscrapers of downtown. In his diary, Weston describes the Ecotopians as primitive and savage. He meets some hunters who have killed a deer. Weston is horrified by the sight, and it shows. One of the hunters wipes some deer blood on Weston's face. He wonders if the practice of hunting is forced upon them due to lack of food, or if it is a form of recreation. Weston describes a moment that he has with the maid. She gives him a look, and he, being interested, returns the look, but she refuses to "play." Weston buys new clothes to help him fit in. He realizes now that they do not use any synthetic materials when they can help it. He states his dislike for the avoidance of synthetics.



Page 16-34

Page 16-34 Summary

FOOD, SEWAGE, AND "STABLE STATES"

Weston has an appointment with the Minister of Food, but when he arrives for his interview, the Minister is busy and he is seen by an Assistant Minister instead. The Assistant Minister tells Weston about their sewage recycling system. Weston asks about the agricultural industry, and the Assistant Minister explains the farming practices and the sale of food in Ecotopia. He also tells Weston about the Bad Practices list, which uses public opinion to control the policies and behaviors of Ecotopian companies.

CAR-LESS LIVING IN ECTOPIA'S NEW TOWNS

Weston visits the new minicity called Alviso. Formerly a sleepy little village, Alviso has recently been redeveloped into a small urban area called a minicity. The streets of Alviso are narrow and winding, and they are mostly surrounded by park area and trees. They are all named instead of numbered, which Weston says makes them very confusing for outsiders. The streets are full of pedestrians and bicycles. Once in Alviso, Weston takes a tour of a factory where electric cars are made. Weston's guides inform him that most of the city's population of 9,000 lives within half a mile of the train terminal. The minicities are structured so that anyone can walk five minutes to a terminal, ride by train another five minutes to any destination on the line, and then walk anywhere in that minicity within five minutes. Weston describes the cleanliness of the water in the bay, and the abundance of sailboats. After leaving Alviso, Weston and his guides take the train to Redwood City, where revision construction is still underway, converting the city into one of the minicities.

Page 16-34 Analysis

FOOD, SEWAGE, AND "STABLE STATES"

At the beginning of the interview, the Assistant Minister of Food completely ignores Weston's questions about agriculture. Instead, he tells him about the solid state food system. All Ecotopians are required to recycle their trash and sewage. The sewage and organic garbage are recycled into fertilizer and pumped back into the food system. So, the Ecotopians have a complete and closed cycle for food growth, sewage, food waste recycling. Finally, after this explanation, the Assistant Minister addresses Weston's question about food production and processing. The Ecotopians do not use synthetic compounds in their fertilizer or any synthetic packaging, and they do not have as large of a variety of products as the Americans. All of this means that the Ecotopians eat healthier than any other nation in the world, and for quite a bit less money. The Assistant Minister then explains the Bad Practices list. When companies do things that violate the laws or cause any harm to the environment, they are placed on the Bad Practices list.



The rules are not enforced by any police force, but the people of Ecotopia generally refuse to buy from the companies on the Bad Practices list. This enforcement by public opinion shows the level of commitment the Ecotopians have to maintaining a healthy environment. The Assistant Minister then explains that the lists are issued by study groups from consumer co-ops. The groups and the scientists who advise them are not allowed to accept any money from the government or from companies, and that due to this fact, they speak with the same footing as any other citizen. Weston then says that these same scientists are probably responsible for the decay of the roads, health system, and the level of industry. The Assistant Minister simply brushes this comment aside by refusing to speak on anything other than food. After speaking to the Assistant Minister and reading an information pamphlet, Weston begins to see the widespread Ecotopian habit of assigning all of the responsibility to the producer, while completely disregarding the responsibility of the consumer.

In his diary, Weston lists some of the other implications of the solid state concept. Shoes cannot have composite soles, as they would not breakdown naturally. New kinds of glass and pottery have to be made to be easily recycled. Nonferrous metals, such as aluminum, are only used when no other "natural" metal will suffice. He also states in his diary that the Ecotopian people are too emotional, and gives an example in which a couple gets into a fight at the hotel in the hallway for everyone to see. He misses his family and just lying around at home. He admits that he feels a bit confused and tired, and he does not know why.

CAR-LESS LIVING IN ECTOPIA'S NEW TOWNS

The towns and cities of the Bay Area are being converted into strings of minicities. The idea behind the minicity string is to take no longer than fifteen minutes to get from any one point to any other in the string. For example, if Alviso was the first minicity in the string, and Redwood City was the last, then someone could walk from the edge of Alviso to the terminal in about five minutes, ride the train to Redwood City in another five minutes, and then walk from the terminal to the outer edge of Redwood City in a final five minutes. This would be the transit time a total of fifteen minutes. This not only eliminates much of the time and cost of the traditional commute, but also solves the problem of parking space, roadway congestion, and traffic pollution.

At the factory, Weston learns about the Ecotopian production methods. Instead of the assembly line method that we use, they have automated almost all of the fabrication process, and the assembly is all done by hand from bins of parts that are kept stocked by the automated fabrication process. The goods are transported from factory to warehouse and from warehouse to store by way of electric truck and their underground beltway system. The underground conveyor belts move storage bins of goods cheaply and efficiently, but Weston points out that there would be quite a mess if the belt system ever clogged up or broke down. The factory that Weston visits produces electric car parts. They fabricate and assemble the front-ends, rear-ends, and battery units for several models of electric car, which are sold to individuals who assemble the parts onto suspensions and bodies of their own design.



After leaving Alviso for Redwood City, Weston notices some boys out in the country side hunting with bows, and the lack of any sign that this was once part of the United States as he knows it. He compares the feeling to that a man of Carthage might have after witnessing the fall of Carthage to Rome and the reconstruction that took place afterward.

Weston notes in his diary that he feels odd here. He feels as though he has been confronted with some sort of opportunity, but that he has missed it. To him, the Ecotopians seem to be a little surprised, and perhaps disappointed with him, as if he were a child who was not learning fast enough, although he does not know what he is expected to learn. Life in Ecotopia often seems either a throwback to the past, or a glimpse into the future. Here Weston is describing Ecotopia as what America once was and may someday be again. The Ecotopians are very in touch with the rest of the world, but not so much with the United States. The Ecotopians seem like adolescents who have rejected their parents' ways, and Weston feels that like adolescence, this is probably just a phase that will pass. He also points out that the Ecotopians have a very loose concept of time. Much like the Native Americans they revere, the Ecotopians pay far more attention to sunrise, sunset, tides, and other natural indications of time than hours, minutes, and seconds. They also mimic the Native American idea of treating the earth as mother, and make references to what the Native Americans would or would not do. Despite their social weirdness, Weston sees that the Ecotopians are still very American people.

After getting bored with his hotel, Weston ends up staying at Franklin's Cove with maybe 40 other writers and journalists and television people. It is an old warehouse that has been converted into living quarters. He describes the people here as secure in themselves as animals. They lounge about, stretch, and even do some weird form of yoga. They also make love. Weston walks in on several couples during sexual intercourse. The couples do not seem to mind, and are not embarrassed at all. Weston envies the Ecotopian sense of social freedom and freedom in expression. He says that they even seem to breathe better. He tries to imitate them as much as he can. Throughout the day, especially in the evenings, people gather together to talk together. During one of these gatherings, Weston discusses the stable state system with another reporter called Bert Luckman. Bert clarifies the system by explaining to Weston that, while there is no true stable state, they have achieved a close approximation of it. He describes the Ecotopian system as a meadow in the sun, where plants grow and die, bacteria help the plant matter decompose, mice eat seeds, and birds eat mice. While there is change, the overall system is self-maintaining. At the cove, Weston also learns of the new role of women in Ecotopian society. Women here are equal to men in pretty much all ways. They work the same jobs, hold the same goals, and behave pretty much the same socially. Despite this, the women still seem feminine to him, and the men, who are more emotional than America men, still seem masculine.



Page 34-54

Page 34-54 Summary

THE UNSPORTING LIFE OF ECOTOPIA

In this chapter, Weston describes the Ecotopian concept of sports. They do not have football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, or boxing. He remarks that they do not even have hockey. Ecotopian sports revolve entirely around the participants, and are for their sole enjoyment. Healthy sports such as running, walking, swimming, rock climbing, and diving are popular, as are hunting and fishing and volley ball. Weston describes this as very dull for the American sports enthusiast.

While Weston does not approve of their idea of sports, he does admit that the general population is far more physically fit than the American population. They walk or ride a bike, or run pretty much everywhere they go. This coupled with their sports, which most citizens participate in, add up to make a very healthy populace. Weston feels that the Ecotopians take this as natural, and do not seem to realize that they are the healthiest people on average in the whole world.

Weston goes on to explain the Ecotopian education system. The children progress through levels, which are not called grades, and as they move up, much of their time is devoted to training in hunting and fishing, and other survival skills. This causes less time to be given over to general education, but they do not seem to mind. The students have a more flexible schedule than American children, and with the good climate of Ecotopia, it is not uncommon to see children hiking with heavy backpacks through unforgiving country. The hikes, which include children of all ages, can last nearly a week. Many parents go along with the hikes and the hunting and fishing expeditions with their kids, not only for parent-child bonding, but also for the chance to kill game and stock up on meat. Children study plants and animals while on these trips, and learn a lot about the environment in which they live. Weston says that the average Ecotopian child can identify different types of plants and animals. They can tell you which roots are edible and which plants are poisonous. Weston admits that he was impressed with the knowledge of a six-year-old child, who was able to describe the various ecological niches.

Weston explains that the hardest thing for Americans to swallow is how the Ecotopians get along without the thrills which Americans are so accustomed to. While the thrill scene seems to be absent from Ecotopian life, Weston does hear rumor of some sort of war games. He hears mention of the games often, but every time that he tries to ask about the war games, the people become evasive and do not give him a straight answer. He has overheard, however, that the games are intense and bloody, and that hundreds of Ecotopian youths are killed each year in these games. The chapter ends with Weston's interest in finding one of these games to watch soon.



ECOTOPIAN TELEVISION AND ITS WARES

Weston tells of the Ecotopian claim that they have sifted through the available technology, and discarded much of it as harmful to the environment. He also tells that the one exception seems to be video and communications technology. The Ecotopians do not travel for business, as they only feel that they should relocate when it is pleasurable to do so. Instead, they use picture phones to take care of their business through video conferences.

Weston also describes Ecotopian television. Unlike in America, television in Ecotopia is more of a public announcement system. Ecotopian television is full of elections, trials, and other court cases, interviews with politicians and aspiring politicians, news, and opinionated television editorials. Weston explains that the television often doesn't just show the news, that often it is the news.

Weston explains that while he sees video sets everywhere, he rarely sees anyone sitting in front of them watching. He says that the people of Ecotopia actually use their televisions, instead of allowing themselves to be used by them.

Weston describes advertising as rather bland, composed mostly of the product's spec list. However, as uninteresting as the advertisements are, he finds them preferable to the jumble of the "regular" programming on Ecotopian television.

The items that are produced in Ecotopia are limited to whatever can be repaired by the consumer with basic tools at a minimal cost. While this severely limits Ecotopia's production industry, Weston does see that pretty much everyone does their own repairs, and there are no repair shops. He also notices that no one seems to give any sort of guarantee on their products.

THE ECOTOPIAN ECONOMY: FRUIT OF CRISIS

In the beginning of this chapter, Weston describes the widely held but misinformed American belief that Ecotopians are lazy and shiftless. This is caused in part by the idea of the new Ecotopian work week. Ecotopians only work 20 hours per week. This decreases the amount of income per person, but doubles the available jobs. Weston points out that most Americans probably do not recognize the break with American standards and thinking that this represents, and he is impressed that the Ecotopian government was able to implement such a change immediately after its rise to power.

The Ecotopians are forced to isolate themselves from more diligent people to maintain this system, which caused a steep drop in Gross National Product. Some militants felt that if the new nation focuses its full energy, resources, knowledge and skills on survival, that even a financial crisis such as the drastic drop in GNP could not only be survived, but might even be politically useful.

After the money stops pouring in for many businesses, the cash fell right into Ecotopian hands. This of course causes a great noise in Washington, and the U.S. government is pushed to take action. However, by this time, Ecotopia already has a substantial and



well-trained militia, armed with weaponry airlifted from France and Czechoslovakia. On top of this, many Americans believe that the Ecotopians have mined many eastern U.S. cities with nuclear bombs. After mining the harbors and setting up blockades, but taking no other actions, they finally give up on it, and allow the Ecotopians to live their lives without federal interference.

The ensuing period of adjustment is very difficult. Many have lost jobs, and cannot not afford to buy the things they needed. The government set rigid price control regulations for the first years to combat this, and also absorbs many of the unemployed for the new sewer and train systems. The overall feeling seems to be that it is difficult but enduring and changing. One man Weston speaks to about it was a child during World War II in Warsaw. He says that the Ecotopian experience was not really all that bad, but then he had to live off of rats and moldy potatoes during the war.

In his diary, Weston notes that he is contacted by a group of men who want to return to a state of normal relation between Ecotopia and the U.S., and want to use Weston as a point of contact with both governments. They want to bring the Ecotopian economy back up to the old American standards, and are ready to fight if necessary to do so. Weston describes some of them as older men who, in America, would probably be members of the rotary club, just normal citizens. However in Ecotopia, they are misfits who have banded together with young and dangerous hotheads as a political group that is willing to commit acts of terrorism in order to get their point across. He does not see any real popular backing for this group in the people of Ecotopia, but he makes note of how to contact them anyways.

Page 34-54 Analysis

THE UNSPORTING LIFE OF ECOTOPIA

The idea of sports for the entertainment of the masses is completely absent from Ecotopian society. The sports that are popular in Ecotopia are sports that are either good for the physical or mental health of the participants, or are simply for their enjoyment.

The typical Ecotopian day has a very short work schedule, filled with breaks, some of which are for exercise and sports. Even the children have a light school schedule, much of which has been replaced with time outside and exercise and sports.

The Ecotopian idea of education focuses more on nature and survival skills than it does technical skills. As a result, Ecotopian children can identify just about any plant or animal, and explain just how it fits into its ecological niche. They know how to make fishhooks, bows, arrows, slings, and nets and traps. What they do not get, however, is skills in mathematics, history, and other subjects more traditionally considered part of a child's education.

Due to the lack of meat processing plants and other businesses of the like, Ecotopians rely heavily on hunting, trapping, and fishing for the meat in their diets. The Ecotopian



children are trained in hunting skills from an early age, and just about any animal is fair game. While hunting is big in Ecotopia, it is prohibited to hunt with a fire arm, even though every Ecotopian home contains a shotgun.

Weston describes the president, Vera Allwen, as a strong woman, who has a powerful personality and would be a force to be reckoned with. When she gives speeches, Weston says that instead of attempting to sell you something, as many Americans speakers seem to, she is giving clarity, strength, and wisdom. Her underlying theme is always unity, and all of her speeches give a sort of family feel.

ECOTOPIAN TELEVISION AND ITS WARES

Weston is confused by what passes for television in Ecotopia. Instead of soap operas and professional wrestling, sporting events and sitcoms, the Ecotopians watch home improvement tips, news, political events and speeches, and odd surreal horror films. They appear so disorganized that some stations even seem to change management at certain times in the day. One channel may show a heated debate on some political matter, and then at noon, change over to home tips or horror movies. It is so bad that Weston actually prefers the advertisements, which he describes as horribly bland, to the regular programming. It is important here to note the true purpose of Ecotopian television. While they do watch some things for entertainment only, the majority of their programs are designed specifically to keep the Ecotopian people informed about their government and the world around them, and to allow them to feel that they are a part of it all.

It is also important to note the lack of devotion of time to television. Instead of sitting in front of the television all day munching on snack food, the Ecotopians prefer to spend most of their free time outside, usually in some form of sports activity. As stated in an earlier section, this is one of the reasons that the Ecotopians, on average are so healthy. It is also interesting to note what effects this might have on their economy, as they do not spend millions of dollars on television, the movie industry, and organized sports, as we Americans do.

In his diary, Weston describes his confusion at the Ecotopian ideas of sex. He can see that the people are very open about the act of sex, and do not seem embarrassed at all if someone else sees or hears them. However, every time he tries to get intimate with an Ecotopian woman, he is met with rejection. It is generally polite response but it is still rejection. One woman that he picks up on the street, after joking with her, becomes disgusted and storms away from him, asking that if he wanted to fuck, then why he did not just say so. This confuses Weston even more, and he ends his diary entry even more sexually frustrated than usual.

THE ECOTOPIAN ECONOMY: FRUIT OF CRISIS

The idea behind the Ecotopian 20-hour work week is that, contrary to the beliefs of the industrial age, humans were not designed to be productive. The Ecotopians feel that



humans should fit into their natural place in the world and coexist with nature instead of dominating nature.

The campaign of placing many businesses under government control causes quite an uproar in America, as it violates every capitalist idea that we hold. Many of the businesses have lobbyists in Washington, and they turn up the political pressure on the government. The United States government decides however, that it really cannot do anything about it, as Ecotopia has declared itself an independent nation, has its own military, and has supposedly mined American cities with nuclear bombs.

Many of the Ecotopians describe the period of initial adjustment as tough times, but at the same time they admit to feeling a level of excitement during the whole thing. It has a wartime feeling to it, which gave the people a feeling of purpose, and helps them endure the hardships. The author introduces an elderly man who lived in Poland as a boy during World War II. His story is used to put the Ecotopian period of adjustment into perspective with real war. The old man reports living on rats and moldy potatoes during the war. He also goes on to say that the Ecotopian adjustment was not really all that bad, and certainly it would not be when compared to the conditions during a real war.

In his diary, Weston describes how the Ecotopians feel toward their technology. He thinks it odd that they do not feel at all apart from their technology. Instead, they seem to feel that the technology, just like themselves and everything else in their lives, sprang up from the womb of nature. When they work with wood, they seem to do so carefully and with reverence. Everything from cutting wood to hammering nails shows their respect and care for nature.

At a lumber camp, Weston meets a woman named Marissa Brightcloud. While showing him the camp and the surrounding forest, Marissa and Weston have sex. Weston writes in his journal that the things they do together push the American ideas of sexual relations out of his head. He writes that they have amazing sex, but he refuses to describe it, and is not sure that he could anyways. Marissa has another regular lover in the camp, but he accepts her staying with Weston while he is there. Weston finds out that night that her lover is just a good friend with whom she has sex and not her mate. Weston and Marissa discuss how she will decide who is right for her to mate with and Weston's poor choices in the past.



Page 55-71

Page 55-71 Summary

IN ECOTOPIA'S BIG WOODS

In this chapter, Weston describes the Ecotopian lumber industry. He writes that anyone who wants to buy lumber must spend time at the lumber camp, planting and caring for trees before the actual purchase of the lumber. He also describes the Ecotopian practice of mature tree cutting. Ecotopians argue that mature tree cutting is cheaper in the long run than clear-cutting, and it causes less damage to forest life. Weston feels that while these are sound arguments, they are all more likely sophisticated rationalizations for what he calls tree worship. He has seen some totem poles all over the camp, and he is sure that this is more evidence for his tree worship theory.

Weston noticed that even though it rained during part of his stay, the stream did not become muddy, which demonstrates the truth of the claims that Ecotopian methods of logging do not cause as much erosion as traditional methods. The Ecotopians use big electric tractors which actually cause less damage to the ground than an ox and cart team. The trees are cut close to the ground, and taken by the tractors to the roads and the big diesel trucks that will haul the trees to the lumber mills.

The Ecotopians actually have a debate going on about the diesel trucks. Some feel that they should be done away with, and replaced by electric trucks. Others feel that they should be kept until they wear out, and then replaced one by one as they fail. Another faction feels that the trucks are relics of a bygone era, and belong in museums.

Weston describes the whole Ecotopian lumber industry as confusing. However, whatever unconventional methods the Ecotopians are using must be working, as lumber is far cheaper there than in America.

In his diary, Weston mentions a visit from the Ecotopian counter intelligence unit. They have somehow heard of his conversation with the underground. They tell him that he is of course free to talk to whomever he wants to, but that it would be much easier on everyone involved if he would simply forget the message to Washington. He reacts defensively at first, but after they explain that they know he is no spy, but that it would be difficult for him to gain audience with the president if he acted like one, he agrees to forget the message. Weston did not like the underground anyways, and it was with some relief that he burned the list of names and contact points.

DECLINE WITHOUT FALL? THE ECOTOPIAN POPULATION CHALLENGE

After a hot debate, the Ecotopians decide to implement a three stage program to lower the population. The first stage goes into effect immediately. A nationwide educational program targeted at all women, so that they could learn about all of the available birth control methods and the dangers of overpopulation is initiated. Also, abortion on



demand was legalized. The birth rate drops to just below the death rate, which helps the population decline. Weston mentions the irony of this, as during the Ecotopian Independence, a record number of pregnancies occurred.

Stage two, which has a much more gradual effect, is more political in nature. All of the taxes are done away with, and all of the large farms and hospitals are broken up into many smaller, local units. This helps to reduce the crowding in cities, and redirects much of the population to the smaller towns and minicities.

The first two stages are very successful, and the population drops by 17,000. Stage three is more a watchful waiting. Abortion costs are very low, and the number of aborted births has leveled out. Almost all women are on some sort of contraceptive. The population decline will probably continue, which is desired.

In his diary, Weston writes about an incident that has everyone glued to their TV sets. The Ecotopian monitoring system has detected large amounts of radiation blowing in off the Pacific. No one seems to know where it has come from or what the cause is. Some actually suggest that special teams of commandos should be sent out to disable plants in Japan, Siberia, and China. Others suggest pollution fines for countries that cause such pollutions. President Allwen declares that she is preparing a protest to whoever is responsible for this. Since many Ecotopians automatically blame the United States for any technological disaster, Weston is not exactly made to feel welcome by many of the Ecotopians that he encounters during this time.

Page 55-71 Analysis

IN ECOTOPIA'S BIG WOODS

Weston's theory of tree worship reflects the Ecotopian concept of oneness with nature. This is one of the central themes of this story, and many examples are found throughout the book. The Ecotopians do not like the wastefulness of clear-cutting, or the loss of forest life that it causes. They require service in the nursery of the forest before anyone can purchase lumber. This reflects their love of nature, especially the forest. The Ecotopians have developed logging methods and equipment that cause very little damage to the forest, and very little pollution and erosion to the ground and water. Weston remarks that he actually saw one man embrace a tree and call it Tree Brother!

The visit from the counter-intelligence agents shows Weston another side of Ecotopia. These men are strikingly similar the government agents that we see on television or read about here in America. They admit that they know he is not a spy but they deliver the ultimatum that if he wants to see the president that he will forget about the message from the underground. These agents are not like the friendly and emotionally open people that Weston has met thus far in Ecotopia. It should be noted that while Weston burned the list of names and contact points, he still describes both visits in his diary, which he later turns in to Max to be published.



Marissa seems to view him as childishly wasteful, and when he becomes cold or business-like, she gets upset and accuses him of being inhuman. However, he has noticed that when he is quiet, they enjoy tender lovemaking and she treats him as a fellow human instead of a wasteful American. When he goes to the train station in the morning, he blurts out that he wants her to go with him. She replies that she wants to, but cannot, and that she will come see him later.

DECLINE WITHOUT FALL? THE ECOTOPIAN POPULATION CHALLENGE

The plan to decrease population and the effect it has on abortion and contraceptive methods shows a different concept of the role of women in society, as well as the family structure. Women in Ecotopia are just as free in everything as men, and no woman has a child by any man other than who she chooses as her mate. While there are semi-stable couples, both heterosexual and homosexual, the idea of monogamy is not enforced. In fact, on four annual holidays, sexual promiscuity is encouraged and practiced by most. The holidays are the solstices and equinoxes, which stem from ancient nature-worship religions. The family structure is completely different as well. Instead of the conventional family, Ecotopian "families" are large clusters of people, some related and some not, who live together. There is a slow but constant shifting of the families, as the single people pair up with singles of other families. The children are generally mentored and parented by the entire community, and this lack of structure and consistency in the family, as well as the homosexuality that does exist, are not considered problems to the Ecotopians, as they would be in America. This shows just how different the Ecotopians are from Americans in some ways.

Weston and Marissa spend more and more time together. She seems able to not think about her other responsibilities or the other lover while she is with Weston, but he finds that he is becoming more and more jealous of the other relationship. Weston does note however, that Marissa spends more and more time with him than the other man. She also gets upset and angry when it is time for him to leave the camp and return to the cove. They are becoming much closer, and Weston begins to wonder what she sees in him. Are there perhaps true feelings for him, or is he simply her mysterious stranger?



Page 71-89

Page 71-89 Summary

SAVAGERY RESTORED: ECOTOPIA'S DARK SIDE

In this chapter, Weston is finally allowed to witness one of the ritual war games. It takes place much like a high school football game, with one team on one side of a field and the other team across the field. Like football, they rush at each other. However, unlike football and more like the gladiators of ancient Rome, instead of balls, they carry spears! The two teams rush towards each other and engage in combat. Weston watches as one man is seriously injured, the other team wins, and combat is ended. The injured man is bandaged up and awaits transport to a hospital. Weston gets a chance to speak to the injured man, who along with an elderly man explains to Weston the origin, reason, and idea behind the ritual combat. That night, Weston dreams that he is in the combat. Once he takes the field, all his team notice that he is not one of them, and he knows that he is alone.

THEIR PLASTICS AND OURS

In this chapter, Weston learns that the Ecotopian plastics are all produced using living biological sources, and not fossilized ones such as petroleum. Their production methods not only produce biodegradable plastics from plant matter, but do so at a relatively low cost.

One method of accomplishing this is making plastics with a short lifespan. These plastics, which are used for beer containers, food containers, and packaging materials, have a short planned lifetime and "die" (biodegrade) much sooner than others.

Another line of plastics are hard and durable, and are meant to replace many metals. These plastics have a much longer lifespan, so long as they do not come in contact with the soil. Once in the soil, they have molecular "key holes" that are activated only by micro-organisms in soil. Once this happens, the decomposition takes place rapidly.

This has resulted in a full line of plastic products, which once left in contact with damp soil, will fully decompose in a matter of weeks. The recycling of these plastics is done by grinding them into smaller pieces, and dumping them into bio-vats of damp soil full of micro-organisms. Despite all of this, there is still a purist movement in Ecotopia that is going for total abandonment of plastics.

Weston discovers a wetsuit-like garment that the Ecotopians call bird-suits or unitards. These suits are woven of some complex combination of fibers. In the rain, the outer layers swell and lie s tightly together that the rain just rolls off of the suit. In warm weather, the inner layers unravel and let body heat out. In the cold weather, they knot up, tightening and holding body heat in. Weston buys two sets to take home with him.



WOMEN IN POWER: POLITICIANS, SEX AND LAW IN ECOTOPIA

Weston explains that, while everyone knows that the Ecotopian president is a woman, many do not understand that the Survivalist Party, which she heads, is also predominately women. This political party is instrumental in the Independence of Ecotopia. Women are a minority in Ecotopia, just as they are in America. Weston goes on at length, explaining the political workings and schemes that eventually result in the separation of Ecotopia from the United States.

He also goes on to explain the Ecotopian legal system. While their legal system is based on the same Bill of Rights as the U.S. Constitution, they do not have laws against drugs, drug dealing, prostitution, and other so called "victimless" crimes. However, what would be considered white-collar crimes in America, and generally not even punished in court, such as embezzlement, fraud, and collusion are punished just as severely as assault and robbery with prison time. The Ecotopian prisons are said to be much like slave labor camps, and all prisoners are required to work.

Due to the common practice of businesses accepting fines as a way to get by with pollution, the Ecotopian government imposes a packet of laws that flat out forbid certain levels of pollution. The businesses that cannot comply with these are either bought out by the government or allowed to fail.

Weston receives a letter from Francine, which is smuggled in through Canada. She reports the usual madness in her life, and nothing has gone terribly wrong, so Weston wonders if she is missing him. He admits that this would be a change in their relationship, but that she can never admit it on paper.

Weston attends one of the Ecotopia fairs, which are held monthly in many towns and minicities. The fair lasts three days and features live music, food, and craftsmen of all kinds. He has his first ever threesome with a couple of girls who are probably about 22 years old or so. Once he gets home, he writes a reply to Francine, but tears it up in the morning before getting back to work.

Page 71-89 Analysis

SAVAGERY RESTORED: ECOTOPIA'S DARK SIDE

The simulated combats are brutal and quite real. They are very similar to the old gladiator games from Rome and Greece, but with some influence from American football as well. Weston feels that these games are brutal and savage, but the Ecotopians get very excited about them. When Weston speaks to the injured man, he finds out the Ecotopian feeling towards cameras. The Ecotopians feel that taking someone's picture has a dark magic side to it that opposes nature's change and death, and that it is trying to freeze and steal the moment. After this, an elderly man explains to Weston that the games were designed to relieve the stress, aggression, and competitiveness that all of mankind experience. He says that while it is brutal, they actually lose fewer men annually than in American car accidents and war casualties.



Since the Ecotopian do not have much in the way of cars, and since they do not have to fight any real wars yet, they feel that they are better off with the war games than the U.S. is without them.

After the game, Marissa goes off with a member of the winning team. When she returns, she is obviously flushed and sweaty from her encounter. Weston is very upset and filled with anger and jealousy at this. Later, when they have sex, he is very rough and holds her down, practically raping her. She is accepting of this, even seems to expect it. Weston is confused at his mixture of hatred and desire, but admits that he loves her free nature, even when it hurts.

THEIR PLASTICS AND OURS

The biodegradable plastic enables the Ecotopians to produce many products that they would not be able to have without plastic, and still fit into their stable state system. The recycling of the plastics is done not only in public recycling vats, but also in home composts, and by simply dropping it onto the ground. It is not considered littering, as in a couple of weeks at most, it will be nothing but soil again.

There are two factions that vie for control in this industry. The defenders of plastic have made plastics that don't feel as "plasticky" and feel that with the use of plastics, they can maintain their standard of living. The purists, however, feel that all plastics should be done away with, and refuse to use any. Instead they use mostly wood. Weston feels that the purists will probably eventually win, as the Ecotopians have a national tendency to prefer a poetic but expensive return to "nature."

Weston gets into a fight with Bert because he did not let him help him in the development of his column on the war games. Bert was upset that he was being so isolated. He tells Weston that he offered to help in his brotherly way, and Weston's refusal hurt him.

Weston talks to a boy whose mother is away for a week. He asks the boy, Kenny, if he is lonely with her gone. The boy replies that he is not lonely, because everyone else is here. Weston becomes very sad and misses his kids enormously. He wonders what they would be like if they were born Ecotopian and not American. He figures that they would grow up faster and probably stronger, but it still scares him, as he wants his girls sheltered. He feels that it would be a realer world than New York, and wonders how they would adapt to the change.

Weston describes the quite in Ecotopia as unsettling at first, but feels that once he gets used to it, it may be nice to only hear natural noises.

Weston finds out that Marissa has been telling the members of her "family" all about their relationship. This angers Weston, who feels hurt that she is revealing their private information without at least talking to him about it first. She is upset that he feels she should not do so. She asks if he is ashamed of being with her. He explains that he is not and just that in America, such matters are kept private. While this is completely against the Ecotopian way, she understands, and he begins to open up a little.



Starting with this chapter, most of the diary entries are quite a bit longer. This is because Weston is experiencing more emotional changes and confusion than he was when he first arrived in Ecotopia. Through these entries, we can trace his emotional development from an American into an Ecotopian, which proceeds increasingly faster as the story goes on.

WOMEN IN POWER: POLITICIANS, SEX AND LAW IN ECOTOPIA

The Ecotopian government, and the Survivalist Party that currently runs it, consist of mostly women. Women hold much more power in politics than the men, which is much more than in America. Since women are a minority in both Ecotopia and America, their specific needs are not being met. The women have lived for 200 years under American control and still not received the attention to their needs that they required. In Ecotopia, the women run the country, and their needs are met. The original women politicians who forced the split between Ecotopia and America were faced with opposition from the government in general, as well as a secret plot by the male politicians to phase the women out of politics and take power away from them. For this reason, the Ecotopian Survivalist Party went to extreme measures to ensure the stability of the party, the stability of Ecotopian government, and the right of the women to hold power.

Due to the Ecotopian ecological values, any pollution is considered a crime, and is punished just as severely as rape, murder, assault, and robbery, which are all rare in Ecotopia. Crimes that would be considered white collar in America, such as embezzlement and fraud are treated equally, as they are crimes of dishonesty, and violate the trust that all Ecotopians seem to hold for each other. The fact that prostitution, gambling, and drug use are not even considered crimes stems from the very "live and let live" attitude that is part of the Ecotopian way. All prisoners are forced to work, and some of the prisons are described as slave camps. This represents the idea that the offenders must actually pay for their crimes, as well as the practical side of the Ecotopian system, as free labor does get much more accomplished.

At a fair, Weston gets drunk and stumbles off with two young women for a threesome. It is his first time to ever do such a thing, but due to their casual attitudes toward it, it is easier for him. He describes how the girls never seem to leave him out of any part of it, even when they are paying more attention to each other than to him, and that even though they are younger; they don't seem surprised by anything that he does. He leaves the experience feeling that his behavior was equal to Marissa's after the war games. He admits feeling a little jealous about her actions still, but does not feel guilty about the encounter with the two young women at the fair.



Page 89-102

Page 89-102 Summary

WORKERS' CONTROL, TAXES, AND JOBS IN ECOTOPIA

Weston asks a politician if the Ecotopian government is socialist. The politician politely lectures Weston on what he sees as the American confusion. According to this man, Ecotopian government is a mix, much like American government, but with the obvious ecological priorities much higher on the list. He tells Weston that the government takeover of businesses was an unavoidable response to many of the wealthy business owners fleeing the country right after Independence.

Weston then asks where the government gets its funding, as all taxes as we know them were abolished soon after Independence. The man tells Weston that no one can inherit land anymore and that it all goes to the government. He also tells Weston that while there no personal income or property or sales tax anymore, there are some corporate tax laws that seem to eliminate many of the tax breaks and loopholes that American businesses use. He goes on to describe the Ecotopian worker as a partner in the business, and not just an employee to be paid hourly. Every common worker discusses profit sharing, tax shelters, retirement plans, and stock options before choosing a company to "partner" with, just like our top executives do. These "partnerships" behave much like American enterprises, but without the attitude of constant expansion, as they try to stay around 300 members. Once above this limit, they seem to break down into inflexible bureaucratic forms, losing both profitability and members. The taxes that are levied are used for the train system, sewer system, phones, water, housing, and other such services, and are controlled entirely by state and city governments. Counties as we know them do not even exist.

RACE IN ECOTOPIA: APARTHEID OR EQUALITY?

Weston at first wonders why there were so few dark-skinned people in Ecotopia, but has now learned why. The black population's economic deprivation under white control makes them increasingly separatist long before Independence. They join in the general exultation when the break with Washington came but later want to control their own territories. After a bitter political struggle, the black areas and Chinatown are designated as city-states within Ecotopia. They have their own governments, levy taxes, have their own police and courts, and enjoy pretty much all of the attributes of tiny independent countries, except for the carrying on of foreign relations. Not everyone, however, chooses to live in the black areas. There are many black people who live in the general population of Ecotopia, and are well integrated.

Weston is surprised by the severity of sentences for violent crime. In New York, a street mugging may result in a one to five-year sentence, which translates to about 18 months time served, with the rest on parole. In Ecotopia, however, it would bring a flat five



years, with no option of parole. However, the serving of the sentences is quite different. Instead of large prisons holding hundreds or thousands of prisoners, Ecotopia has many small institutions housing only a few dozen inmates each. During the day, under light guard, inmates participate in the general life of society, and hold ordinary jobs. At night however, they are confined, sometimes with their spouses or lover, if they so desire.

Although pretty much all of the inhabitants of Soul City regard English as their native language, the establishment of Soul City brought an emphasis on Swahili in the schools, and many adults now speak it. Weston sees this as useful in the dealing with African states, and feels that Ecotopia is the source of considerable financial and munitions aid to revolutionaries in South Africa.

Page 89-102 Analysis

WORKERS' CONTROL, TAXES, AND JOBS IN ECOTOPIA

Not long after Independence, much of the capitol leaves the new country. Most wealthy families flee either to Los Angeles, the East, or to their estates in other countries. The government spokesperson compares it to the economic situation after the Cuban revolution. The spokesperson admits that this damage the managerial capabilities of Ecotopian enterprises. While the number of refugees is low, it is pretty much all of the business owners and upper management. This hurts the Ecotopian economy at first, because most of the people with any experience and skills in running a business have left the country.

At first, the Ecotopian government is worried about how they would feed and house the population, and teeters between carrying on business in the old American way, and breaking through to new methods. However, after a few months, the people themselves solve the problem. Seeing that the former business owners are no longer around, the workers begin spontaneously taking over farms, factories, and stores. The spokesperson explains that this process was chaotic at first, but not anarchic, as the local courts and government control the process. This is not unlike the many companies in France during the sixties that were taken over by the employees, or the many U.S. corporations that became employee-owned by legal and gradual means.

Soon, larger economic changes take place. Large amounts of money are diverted toward the construction of the stable-state systems in agriculture and sewage, as well as the transportation system (which does not conform to the stable-state principle.) Ecotopia does not have many of the taxes that the U.S. does. Instead the only taxes they have are corporate taxes based on both net and gross incomes. However, they eliminate many of the corporate tax loopholes. Instead of individuals inheriting property, the land automatically goes to the government. They also have a policy of only spending tax money on public works, and doing so publicly. Ecotopians avoid any unnecessary taxes on the principle that they are either regressive or promote divisiveness among the people.



The Ecotopian "employee" is actually a partner in the company, just as many top executives in American companies. One cannot simply start a business, hire people, then fire them when he is done with them and pocket the profits. Each worker discusses profit sharing, tax shelters, retirement plans, and other partnership terms before joining a company.

The spokesperson also explains that investment in other companies is prohibited. The only way to invest profits is in the national banking system, which in return provides funds to the businesses. Weston compares this to the arrangement used by the Yugoslavs in the seventies, and feels that it gives the government huge leverage over the economy.

In his journal, Weston admits that his attitude is changing. After reading back over his last few columns, he sees that he has lost the idea that something must be wrong with the "Ecotopian experiment" as he calls it. There must be some major flaw, which he can expose in his writing, that will make it all just go away, and no one will have to pay any attention to Ecotopia. Now, Weston is not so sure that there is. He is beginning to see the practicality and the beauty in the system, and wonders if perhaps he is going a bit soft. Things with Marissa are improving, and he is beginning to slip right in to Ecotopian life.

RACE IN ECOTOPIA: APARTHEID OR EQUALITY?

Life in the black areas (often called Soul City) seems to have more hold-overs from pre-Independence days than Ecotopia as a whole. Many items that are not available in Ecotopia are still found in the black areas and a few private cars are even tolerated. They also have a 10% higher per capita income than the white areas, which is probably due to the longer working hours. As one stylish black man tells Weston, "We're still making up for lost time."

Since a high number of the convicted criminals in early Ecotopia and the U.S. tended to be black, Soul City faced a major problem here. They legalized marijuana and some other drugs, which freed many prisoners. Some prisoners guilty of "sex crimes" were freed, along with people who were jailed for loitering, drunkenness, and vagrancy. The government curbed the traffic of heroin by taking it over as a government monopoly.

The prison system in Ecotopia and Soul City seems odd when compared to our own, or that of pretty much any other country, but the Ecotopians feel that it is much more effective. They argue that people guilty of violent crimes generally commit another one when freed, and end right back in prison. Traditional prison life increases their tendency to commit violence. The exception here is many murderers, who kill spouses or acquaintances, and seldom kill again. They argue that in America, prisons are just training grounds for a criminal's next crime. In fact, this is a common statement made, even today, in America. Soul City penologists believe that their relatively humane policies actually give inmates the time and opportunity to develop non-criminal modes of life in realistic circumstances.



Weston compares the segregation of Ecotopia to that of South Africa. While South Africa's segregation is forced by the whites, and the blacks of Soul City chose it for themselves, Weston still feels that it is a sure admittance that the races cannot live in harmony. He fears that it bodes ill for our own large cities, where there are already large black center cities who want secession.

In his journal, Weston tells of growing tension between himself and Marissa. She insists on coming and going only as she wants, which bothers Weston. He is confused as to why this would bother him, as it is the same arrangement he had with Francine. Perhaps he wants more from Marissa? He also experiences his first earthquake, which barely shook the room a little. Nevertheless, it rattles him and causes him to sweat a little. He imagines that life with Marissa would be quite like such an earthquake.



Page 102-122

Page 102-122 Summary

ENERGY FROM SUN AND SEA

The Ecotopians use more energy than many people would think, which is mainly due to their transportation system. They inherit a system of oil and gas power plants, which they shut down within a few years. They also are left with a number of atomic-fission plants, hydroelectric dams, and some geothermal power sources as well. All of these they consider temporary though, as they plan to replace them with direct solar power, wind power, and nuclear fusion.

The Ecotopians have a solar power systems ranging from the large silvered parabolic mirror, which focuses sunlight and sends steam through pipes to drive a generator, to the massive photo-cells, similar to the ones used in satellites. The cell banks, which cover an area of several miles, impressive as they are, pale in comparison to the Punta Gorda thermal sea-power station. It reminds Weston of some mad duke's medieval fortress. It pumps up massive amounts of water from the sea, then, using very clever heat exchangers, heat energy is transferred from the water to storage units. Ecotopians even believe that they can electrically tap the photosynthetic process of some plants!

Many of the Ecotopian families power their own houses, using anything from solar panels and windmills to waterwheels. Many homes are heated by water pumped up from large underground water tanks, and heated by radiators connected to solar units on the south facing walls and roof.

COMMUNICATIONS IN ECOTOPIA: PRESS, TELEVISION AND PUBLISHING

Ecotopian law forbids any one entity from owning multiple operations in the same city, and require that each station meet a certain quota for "public service" broadcasting. These laws favor the small entrepreneurial groups, resulting in several papers and magazines and networks in each city, each with very different views.

Television stations are also decentralized. While some centralized new services are still allowed, television stations are forced into a great deal of local programming. The government itself acquires several channels to be used for political programs, making government affairs more or less constantly visible on TV.

Even though Ecotopian media is one of anarchic decentralization, Weston is able to find the paradoxes. While most newspapers are smaller even than American tabloids, they can be bought through electronic print-out terminals, which provide two types of print, one which lasts indefinitely, and one that fades away so that the paper can be reused. Books are available on the same system.

ECOTOPIAN EDUCATION'S SURPRISES



Weston tours a school near the minacity of Reliez. Crick School, which is named for the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA on a wood lot outside of town. The children walk to school, where they spend a few hours a day in study and physical work. Throughout the rest of the school day, they group up for play or working on their projects.

During the two hours of actual work, the children either work in the gardens or in small factories at the schools. The children at Crick School have a factory for birdhouses and for seedling flats. The profits of the factories are used as the children please.

The children are grouped together not by age but by general development level. However, often older children will sit in and watch classes for younger children, or younger children watch older children. The groups of children are sort of tribal in their makeup, with usually an older child taking the position of group leader. However, these groups do not seem to be tyrannical, and the children, even when at play, are surprisingly quite considerate of each other. The group dynamics and behavior seem to be encouraged by the teachers or at least not forbidden. Many of the lower level teachers teach everything, but teachers of the older students seem to specialize. They even have a teacher for mechanics, which consists of not only that branch of physics, but also the design, building, and repair of physical objects. The schools are like any other Ecotopian business, owned and operated by the teachers that work there. Crick School is legally a corporation.

Page 102-122 Analysis

ENERGY FROM SUN AND SEA

After Independence, Ecotopia is left with a power grid ran by many different power sources. They close down the gas, oil, and coal plants as soon as possible. The very idea of burning fossil fuels for electricity goes against the stable-state plan. These plants are the ones with the highest emissions, and are therefore the most destructive. The hydroelectric dams are seen as impractical and temporary, as they tend to create silt buildup, which not only reduces the effectiveness of the process, but is also harmful to the local aquatic life. The nuclear fission plants are effective, but also considered temporary due to their radioactive byproducts and heat pollution.

The main goal of the Ministry of Energy in Ecotopia is to be powered by completely safe and renewable methods. They of course embrace wind, solar, and tidal energy. They are also working on a method by which they can directly harness the photosynthetic process of plants, which pretty much sums up the whole Ecotopian idea of oneness with nature and the stable-state principle. They also keep an eye on the attempts of others to make nuclear fusion possible and practical for safe mass production of energy, though they are not overjoyed by the idea, as they find any process that concentrate gigantic amounts of energy at any one point unnatural. The power plant at Punta Gorda works much like a giant refrigerator, only in reverse. Since water can contain great amounts of heat energy, even a relatively small temperature differential can yield great amounts of power when the water is pumped through the heat exchangers. Large quantities of sea



water are required for this, and so the plant itself is huge. Weston says that it is so overwhelming, that it seems almost an extension of the tide itself. Some of the deeper, colder water contains large quantities of nutrients. This water is piped to ponds, where it will sit before being injected along with the warmer surface water. While in the ponds, the nutrient rich colder water feed the fish and shellfish, which are important byproducts of the plant.

Weston tells us how the Ecotopians power their own homes. According to him, it is not uncommon with these "fanciful people" to find a house powered by a water wheel suspended above a river or stream with cables. Most homes are heated by solar radiation stored in water in underground tanks. The south walls and roof of many homes are dedicated to solar cells used to power these heating devices. Weston feels that many of these practices are ridiculous, but must admit that they are also practical.

One night, while watching Marissa sleep, Weston writes in his journal. He compares his life with Marissa to his life with Francine, and later to his marriage with Pat. He feels confused at how happy he can be with both Marissa, the serious passionate woman on one end of the country, and Francine, the playful woman on the other end of the country. He also looks back at his marriage to Pat and the pain of that failure. He tells us how the Ecotopians seem to lack the emotional frailty that we Americans do. They are very realistic, and do not have the high expectations that we do, or quite the level of emotional devastation if a relationship fails. Weston feels that this probably means marriages last longer in Ecotopia, but that it seems sadly unromantic.

COMMUNICATIONS IN ECOTOPIA: PRESS, TELEVISION AND PUBLISHING

Weston admires Ecotopian editors and writers and television newsmen for their integrity and devotion to the public welfare, but admits that the conditions under which they work would be unbearable for him or his American colleagues. Weston feels that these laws give an unfair advantage to small and independent entrepreneurial groups.

Weston feels that the decentralization of television, like publications, was a bad idea. With the focus on local political programs and news, entertainment has taken a back seat. The old films and amateur shows, mainly rock concerts, comedians, and endless technical arguments on ecological problems that make up most of the "entertainment" programming would hardly keep the attention of the average American audience. They are made with little attempt at showmanship, and are further dulled by the lack of the surrealist commercials that we have in America.

He does however admit that Ecotopian news coverage is surprisingly good. Of course no Ecotopian news reporter can be stationed in America due to a lack of diplomatic relations, so information on the U.S. is skimpy and mostly derived from European press services. The Ecotopian news service is excellent with world news, and even ran accounts of the latest American air strikes in Brazil more than a week before American papers did.



One night at the Cove, Bert asks Weston about the biggest story he ever had to cover up. This leads to a discussion about the helicopter war. Weston, like many Americans, did not even know about the war. Evidently shortly after the secession, American Army and Air Force helicopters are deployed to recapture and occupy Ecotopia. The Ecotopians have developed anti helicopter rockets and shoot down over seven thousand helicopters. After shooting down the helicopters, the Ecotopians confirm rumors of Ecotopian bombs under several of the large American cities by threatening to detonate them. The American government suppress the story so well, that even the media workers did not know about it. Weston explains that this story never made it to the general public. When Bert asks what he is going to do about this, Weston's answer is that he is not sure. He feels that he should make the story known, but does not want to start a war. He says that he is not so irresponsible as to just print anything with no regard to the consequences.

ECOTOPIAN EDUCATION'S SURPRISES

The Ecotopian idea of school is very different from ours. In most cases today, we load children onto buses, which transport them to large buildings, usually well within the confines of a city, and then teach them through lecture. The Ecotopian schools usually are outside and well out of the city. Instead of hours of lecture, the children spend much of the day either playing or working on projects, such as tree houses or underground hangouts. While the students are working, they are usually manufacturing something. The students that work in the factory at Crick School show excellent carpentry skills, and Weston points out that they have to use concepts of geometry and physics for many of the projects. The purpose of this educational system is not only to teach children job skills and how to function in society as adults, but it also uses these projects to teach more advanced math and science. Geometry and Physics are, for many students, difficult subjects. The Ecotopians tackle this problem by using practical examples, which probably also help to keep the children interested in learning. While two or three hours of this type of work, combined with several hours of play and working on "projects" is not likely to churn out many astrophysicists or mathematicians, it does prepare the students for exactly what they will experience as adult members of Ecotopian society, and seems to work quite well for them. There have been many people who did very well in school, but had trouble with the complications that come with adult life. This lack of practical learning in American schools may very well be to blame for this. For example, everyone is taught basic arithmetic, but how many of these children can balance a checkbook, or budget bills. and grocery lists? The average high school student can tell you how to find the area of a square, rectangle, circle, or a triangle. How many high school students can use that to frame a house? Weston also tells us that the children are allowed to dispose of the profits as they see fit. This teaches the children about finance and business management, another set of useful skills for adult life that are not taught in traditional schools.

While the schools are private, and do charge a tuition, the Ecotopian government does not let that get in the way. The Ecotopian government gives grants to families with incomes under a certain limit, a portion of which is marked for tuition. While the

government is not willing to take the burden of education of the parents entirely, they are willing to help at least make it possible.

Weston is introduced to a young general of the Ecotopian military. He tells Weston about the militia style they use, which is similar to the one that was tried in America in the 1700s. To Weston, it sounds more like a guerilla band than a real army. Despite being decentralized, the Ecotopians have a standing army about the same size as Canada's. The young officer says that they would love to shrink it even more, but the US simply cannot be trusted that well yet. Weston says that there does not seem to be the same level of bureaucratic featherbedding mentality that plagues the American military. This means that they only have the officers they need, and that they do their jobs. To put it simply, bureaucratic featherbedding refers to over staffing or hiring people to do jobs that do not need to be done.



Page 122-133

Page 122-133 Summary

LIVING IN PLASTIC TUBING

Weston takes a tour of an extrusion factory that makes housing sections from plastic. The sections, which are mass produced, resemble segments of airplane cabin. They are made from plastic derived from cotton fibers. These housing sections can be joined together to build a house of pretty much any shape or design that the owner wishes. The houses are often made of wood or stone central sections, with these plastic housing tubes joined to them.

The construction of these houses is much cheaper than wood or stone houses, and makes for very well insulated, cheap, and easily repaired homes. In fact, the only real problem that they had in the beginning was that the homes were so lightweight that some blew away in strong winds! This was fixed by using a corkscrew in every corner, much as we use tent stakes. Many of these homes have extruded plastic segments as bathrooms, containing tub, sink, toilet, and space heater all built into the segment. Usually, there is a septic tank underground right outside the bathroom segment, which processes the sewage and produces methane gas, which powers the heater. Effluent that runs off is clear liquid, and is often used to water the gardens. Sludge is removed from the tanks every couple of years and used as fertilizer.

SEPARATION OF FUNCTIONS: RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN ECOTOPIA

Weston discovers that the Ecotopians separate their scientific research from their teaching. In the United States, a large amount of research is done on university campuses, but Ecotopians have many small institutions manned by researchers. The school teachers that do scientific research only do so when they do not have classes to teach.

Much of the research done in Ecotopia is based on biology and botany. For example, the Ecotopians use the process of fermentation to get alcohol from grains, beet sugar, and other crops for heating and cooking, as well as other chemicals. The Ecotopians are even making great progress in making heavy lubrications from plant matter. They use very little petroleum products, and accomplishment that they are very proud of. The Ecotopians have also achieved a high level of sophistication in plant breeding, and have been working on decoding the language of dolphins for years.

Neither in research institutes or in universities can one find professors of political science, sociology, or psychology. The Ecotopians do not value these subjects as much, and while some books can still be found, these subjects are not considered important. The professors of such classes have drifted over into other fields, such as biology and philosophy. The universities seem to Weston to have even more student unrest than our



own. It is not uncommon for professors or school officials to be removed from office by the students. The student body of most Ecotopian universities is smaller too, as they seem to only attend because they like the intellectual atmosphere. Ecotopian society is far more concerned with experience than licenses and credentials.

Page 122-133 Analysis

LIVING IN PLASTIC TUBING

While most Ecotopian buildings are either wood or stone, many people do use the extruded plastic houses. Wood houses and stone houses are difficult to construct, and more expensive. While many people do own these plastic houses, they do not treat them with the reverence they do wood and stone, even though this plastic is produced from corn and cotton fiber. The plastic houses contain more rugs, curtains, and carpeting than the wood and stone. This is probably to soften the image of being artificial.

In his journal, Weston tells us that he and Marissa are on a more flexible basis now, and more balanced sexually. She goes with him on a tour of one of the plastic houses and is very upset. She had never been in one before and is appalled. She calls it another piece of Weston's American crap, and thought that he is backsliding. She is very upset, and even cries.

Weston and Marissa both discuss their feelings for each other. Weston discovers that he loves her, and she admits that she is beginning to love him. When he asks her if she loves him as a potential mate, she says that she is not sure, but that if he were Ecotopian, the answer would probably be yes.

SEPARATION OF FUNCTIONS: RESEARCH AND TEACHING IN ECOTOPIA

The Ecotopians feel that teachers should focus solely on teaching the students. For this reason, there is little to no research going on in Ecotopian universities. Instead, Ecotopia is full of many smaller institutions devoted to scientific research, mostly biology and botany. They range in size from labs of 20 or 30 people to only 1 to 5 people. These smaller labs are thought to draw the kind of brilliant scientific minds that work best either alone, or in very small groups. These institutions are funded by the central government, but are under very little supervision, if any.

Sociology, political science, and psychology do not seem to be valued in Ecotopian society, and the professors who once taught such classes have since moved to biology and philosophy, and other subjects. The most important subjects in Ecotopian universities are biology and botany, which are also the chief focuses of their research. Many of the standardized lectures of pre-Independence Berkley were recorded onto video disks, and are available to the general public. Any Ecotopian citizen can enroll in the video classes and receive a great education in a variety of specialized subjects. However, on campus, the students are expected to be competent in the mental processes of the humanities, the biological and physical sciences, and political thought.



Each class is a year-long class, with only one test at the end. Weston finds it hard to believe that a generally educated Ecotopian is expected to think clearly about both the tonal system of gamelan orchestras and the endocrine system of a cat. However, judging by some of the conversations he has had with Ecotopians, he feels the system is working quite well.

The Ecotopians do not put any real value on degrees, licenses, certifications, and other such credentials, and as a result there are virtually no jobs requiring degrees, and very few students scrambling about for a PhD. Ecotopians value experience and personal achievement far higher.

In his journal, Weston writes about an upcoming interview with president Allwen. He is very excited about it, and writes Max for an extension and to tell Pat and Francine that he will be staying longer. When he tells Marissa about the interview, and that soon after he will be going back to New York, she gets upset with him, and calls him a lousy and rotten son of a bitch. They get into a fight and both end up crying. After a while, Marissa goes home, still crying. Weston wonders how their relationship had gotten so out of hand, or if perhaps it was the whole time and he just did not want to see it. He wonders if this is what love really is, simply a crazy lure and prelude to pain.



Page 133-150

Page 133-150 Summary

ECOTOPIAN MUSIC, DANCE, OTHER ARTS

In Ecotopia, pretty much everyone participates in art. There is an abundance of professionals and amateurs making attempts at anything from dancing, to writing, to sculpting and painting, to music and video. Due to the large amount of people striving for recognition, the competition is very tough, and many aspiring artists are forced to take other jobs and pursue their art careers on the side.

Music plays a large role in Ecotopian art, with every large family, farm, or factory having its own musical group. Most of this music is based on dance rhythm, and pretty much everyone dances on a regular basis.

HOSPITALS AND HEALTH CARE: THE ECOTOPIAN WAY

Weston describes the hospitals in Ecotopia as small and rustic in appearance, but with a highly trained and dedicated staff. The staff almost outnumber the patients, and is trained not only in the standard medical practice, but also massage, which they consider essential to the healing process. They do not use the plethora of electronic devices that can be found in American hospitals, instead they use only the radios that are used to discretely call the nurses, who work longer shifts than American nurses and only focus on one or two patients at a time.

The Ecotopians are covered by a form of cradle-to-grave medical insurance. The local governments have control of the wages for doctors, so that while they may haggle a bit for on the pay from different municipalities, they no longer have the power to just set their own fees.

Page 133-150 Analysis

ECOTOPIAN MUSIC, DANCE, OTHER ARTS

Just as Ecotopians blur the lines between professional and amateur in science, they do so in art as well. The vast majority of Ecotopians participate in art in some way. This, along with the avidity with which most Ecotopians pursue the arts, makes completion very tough. They do not seem to care much about who the artist is, but the individual piece of art itself. One might look at an Ecotopian art collection and find various paintings done by the owner, along with sculptures that were given as gifts and works of art from famous artists. For this reason, traveling artists and art shows do not draw quite the attention they do in the rest of the world.



Ecotopian musicians are a dime a dozen, and play every kind of music known to man, including a few new styles composed in Ecotopia. Their music focuses mainly on dance, and people can be seen dancing where ever there is music. While Weston hears a wide variety of music, he has trouble catching the words, and the Ecotopians seem to dislike the idea of writing the words down for him. What he did catch of the more popular songs seem to be romantic lamentations, similar to what he calls hillbilly music. This music is a reminder that whatever the Ecotopian revolution did accomplish, it did not solve the basic miseries of the human condition. While some Ecotopian musicians have gained worldwide fame, none of them seem to want recognition for themselves. One musician, who refuses to give Weston his name, said that they are like the Balinese in that they do not have art but they all just do everything as well as they can.

Weston participates in one of the war games. He originally only intends to observe, but then he finds himself holding a spear and wearing the fighting gear! He describes the fear of the charge, and the exhilaration of beating back the enemy. He feels an indescribable hatred for the enemy, and a shared strength with his comrades. During one of the charges, he is wounded and has to have an operation on a spear wound on his side. The nurse, Linda, tends him more like a loving friend or mother than a nurse. She spends all night sitting with him and asleep on the couch while he slept. He remarks on how this is so strange to him. Linda tells him that while American hospitals are so uncomfortable, the whole point of Ecotopian hospitals is to offer a comfortable and happy place to heal. Marissa seems to see him in a better light after he participates in the war game, as if she is happier that he is now a little more Ecotopian than before.

HOSPITALS AND HEATH CARE: THE ECOTOPIAN WAY

The hospitals of Ecotopia are smaller, containing usually no more than 30 patients at a time, and resemble rustic country clinics more than the large and sterile city hospitals Weston is used to. Contrary to appearances, Weston finds that these hospitals are staffed by very professional and capable doctors and nurses. There are usually as many or more nurses than patients, so that everyone gets all the care they need. The lines between doctor and nurse are blurred somewhat, as doctors perform some of the duties that would be left to nurses in America, and nurses perform some of the duties that are reserved for doctors in America. Both seem equally competent, and are willing to do pretty much whatever is needed, without worry of whether or not it fits their job description.

The Ecotopian government provides a sort of insurance for its citizens from birth to death. Doctor's wages are set by the local government of each minacity, which stops doctors from setting unreasonably high fees.

There is a shortage of specialists, as many of them left the country shortly after secession. The specialists who did stay are obligated to spend a certain amount of time in general medical practice. This is to keep them in touch with the needs of the people, but Weston finds it wasteful. The Ecotopian doctors are also required to go through some sort of psychological training, and seem almost as concerned for Weston's mental wellbeing as his physical.



Weston writes in his journal about how he has noticed that most of the patients have opposite sex nurses, and that in most case the care is very intimate. He asks Linda about this, and if this causes any trouble emotionally, she was irritated by the question and his attitude, and asks him if he thinks she is his slave or something. She says that she is a person too, and is in complete control of her actions. He feels a bit silly after realizing that she is right. Later, Linda and Weston actually make love. He describes her as not quite as pretty as he first thought, or as smart but a born nurse. She is warm, caring, and kind. He asks her what will happen when he leaves, and she says that she will take a vacation, on which she will think of him a lot, and he will probably write of her in his diary.

When Weston returns from the hospital, he mentions Marissa going to New York with him. They get into an argument and Weston questions her love for him. She assures him that she does love him, but that she would be unable to make a life for herself in his society. Weston dreads the next day when he must return to New York.

Weston sees the president on what is to be his last day in Ecotopia. He describes her as a direct person, who, despite her small size, gives off a great air of authority. Weston brings up the American president's offer for normalization of relations. She seems to feel that this would be a good thing, but assures him that there is no chance of reunification. She stops in the middle of her speech about not reunifying and asks him how he feels now that he has spent time in Ecotopia. He tells her that he has enjoyed his time there and was surprised by just how much. She tells him that she thinks that he should stay longer, as they have more to show him, and they still expect more out of him. When the interview is over, he feels disappointed that he did not achieve his goals and feels as if the whole trip had been a waste. He says that Allwen seemed disappointed in him as well, so he assumes that she did not get what she wanted out of him either. The disappointment and depression lasts for a few days.



Page 150-167

Page 150-167 Summary

ECOTOPIA: CHALLENGE OR ILLUSION?

Here, Weston discusses where he sees Ecotopia going in the future and trying to sum up his Ecotopian experience for his final column. After six weeks of study, he still finds it hazardous to guess. He is forced to conclude that the Ecotopian experiment seems to be a success. The land is well cared for and productive, the air and water are cleaner, and food is plentiful and wholesome. Everything is operating on the stable state system, and it would seem that everything will continue to do so indefinitely.

WORK AND PLAY AMONG THE ECOTOPIANS

Not only do the Ecotopians have an unusually short work week, but they also have an interesting policy of covering for each other at work. Often an entire office will take off work to go hang out somewhere and leave only 1 or 2 people to cover the phones. It is not uncommon to see a group of businessmen discussing business, then stop in the middle of work and go to a sauna to continue their discussions on a more personal level. It is also common for an entire section of a factory to shut down without notice and someone breaks out alcohol or marijuana and start at party in the middle of the working day.

There are a surprising number of intellectual types in the common work force of factories and farms. This is partly due to the lack of class differentiation, and partly due to the deliberate policy that makes students alternate a year of work with each year of school.

There were a number of unemployed people before Independence, but thanks to their new 20-hour work weeks, unemployment is no longer a big problem. With the basic minimum guaranteed income and the core stores, the occasional bout of unemployment is not really all that bad for Ecotopians. In fact, this unemployment is often extended intentionally to give more time for leisure or study or work on some other project.

Page 150-167 Analysis

ECOTOPIA: CHALLENGE OR ILLUSION?

Weston feels that while the whole Ecotopian way of life is very strange for an American, but it does have its merits. The environment is better and there seems to be many benefits to their medical, education, and work systems. They all live seems to exist on the stable state system quite well and efficiently. These advantages came at a heavy price though. Not only is Ecotopian industry not doing as well as our own, but the decentralization mindset is causing other groups of people within the Ecotopian society



to talk of further secession and further decentralization. Ecotopians feel that the smaller a nation is, the better the people can fit into their own ecological niche, which would be better for both man and nature.

In his journal, Weston mentions that he cannot stand to read his last column, but that they will probably love it in New York. He calls it real objective pseudo-think, and is just trying to come to conclusions at any cost. This demonstrates the changes in perspective that he has already experienced, making him see the world, and his own writing differently than before.

That night, Weston is plagued by dreams of his experiences in Ecotopia and with Marissa especially. He gets very little sleep, and is not sure if he will be able to say good-bye. He mentions just leaving without saying anything, as he thinks it will be easier for him.

The day that he is to leave, a group of people come into his room and very politely kidnap him. There is no violence, but they just grab him and his stuff, and herd him downstairs. Bert tells him that they are friends, and that he should go with them. He tells Weston that they are taking him to a place that will make him feel better and that it would be a shame for him to leave the country with his current attitude. They take him to a beautiful bathhouse resort, and keep him there for a few days. They refuse to tell him who they are, only that they are friends and mean him no harm. He tells them that he only wants to get out of the country, because it is just not real for him. They say that this is only because he will not let it be real for him, and that it is very real for them. They tell him that it is more than just a job and that it has been an adventure also, and that it still is, even if they are the ones continuing it.

WORK AND PLAY AMONG THE ECOTOPIANS

Weston is adjusting to the openness of Ecotopians, but he is still put off when during a personal conversation, someone tells him that they are working, and then walks off to go back to work. With the Ecotopian 20-hour work week, and the frequency with which they stop in the middle of work and go recreate or get drunk or high, Weston is amazed that they have even the level of productivity that they do. The Ecotopians do not really differentiate between work and leisure time, or keep the job separate from "real life." They seem to genuinely enjoy work.

Students are required to spend one year of work for every year of school. This not only prolongs the Ecotopian education, but also ensures that everyone has some practical work experience when they leave school. This may also account for much of the partying at the workplace.

Marijuana is not only made legal, but the government distributes top grade seeds, so that now it is not uncommon for everyone to have their own small garden of it. Weston is not sure if this is fully responsible for the openness, friendliness, and intimacy amongst Ecotopian people, but he is sure that it is connected. It is not uncommon for Ecotopian people to warmly embrace each other in the streets or for complete strangers



to talk to each other, give a hug or pat on the shoulder, then walk off. In America, such actions are considered taboo. In the southern states, it is not uncommon for complete strangers to wave at each other, or nod, or say hello, but even this does not compare to what Weston experiences in Ecotopia. While such behavior would be considered strange and too forward, even in the friendliest of communities in the South, we must remember that in Weston's New York, complete strangers do have little or no communications with each other unless they have to. For Weston to have gotten used to comments and touches from strangers shows just how much he has acclimated to the Ecotopian way of life.

One night at the spa, Weston attempts to escape, but is thwarted by a mountain lion killing a rabbit. The noise brings dogs and one of his captors. He plays it off as if he was simply out watching the moon, but they seem disappointed in him. The next day he tries on his New York clothes for the first time since he came to Ecotopia. They are a bit loose, but they feel good. He catches himself in the mirror and is horrified at the image. He doesn't even appear human to himself anymore, and feels that he must get out of those horrid clothes as soon as possible. This is the first time that Weston realizes how drastically he has changed. This is the turning point in Weston's life, where he begins to make the decision to stay in Ecotopia and never to return to New York. New York represents a world that is no longer his home. He goes down into the bath to soak for a bit. After floating around for a while, he hears his own voice announce loud and clear that he is staying in Ecotopia. He did not see it coming, but realizes that he must have been fighting off saying that for weeks now. His "captors" begin shrieking and whooping with joy, and they all jump up out of the bath and go upstairs to celebrate. Soon five grown people are prancing about and laughing, completely naked! One of them gets Marissa, who was there for most of the day, and they have a very emotional moment. When he returns to the Cove, a party is prepared for him, and Ben reveals that he attempted to get Weston kicked out of the country. Instead, President Allwen sends his kidnappers to get him and take him to the spa for a few days, hoping that he would have his breakthrough.

EDITORS' EPILOGUE

The editor's epilogue is written from the perspective of Max, Weston's old boss. It is meant to give closure to the book and explain that the columns and notebook was published in their entirety, just as Weston had wished. Max writes that these entries are "questionable and controversial", but that he respected Weston's wishes. This note is followed by Weston's note to Max, in which he tells Max that he has decided not to come back. He sends Max the journal, and tells him that by reading it he will understand Weston's decision to stay and how he came to it. He also thanks Max for sending him on this assignment, when neither of them knew where it might send him. As he says in his final sentence of the note to Max, it led him home.



Characters

William Weston

William Weston is the main character in Ecotopia. He lives in New York, where he is the top internal affairs reporter for the Times-Post. He has an ex-wife and two children, who he regrets leaving. He has a lover called Francine, who he sees on and off between his jobs.

Weston is sent on a special job by the Times-Post and the president of the United States. He is asked to go to Ecotopia and bring to light for all of America just what exactly is going on over there. He meets many people of Ecotopia who help him to understand the Ecotopian way. While touring an Ecotopian lumber camp, he meets a woman called Marissa Brightcloud. They have sex several times and he falls in love with her. After completing his assignment, Weston sends in the last post for his column, his diary, and notice that he has decided to stay in Ecotopia with Marissa.

Marissa Brightcloud

Marissa Brightcloud is an attractive woman of Italian decent, who has adopted a Native American name. She works and lives in a lumber camp, and is one of seven members of a committee that is elected to run the camp. She is a strong, warm, and physical woman. Marissa is slender and has dark curly hair and large eyes. Marissa feels best when she is in the forest.

Marissa and Weston become romantically involved, and she becomes upset, often violently so, when he makes references to going back to the city and taking her with her. Even in the end of the story, she is still a bit mysterious. Her resolve to remain in Ecotopia never wavers in the face of Weston's offers to take her to New York. While she assures Weston that she does love him, she refuses to give him a straight answer to his questions about marriage and children. In the end, she plays a large role in his decision to stay in Ecotopia.

Bert Luckman

Bert Luckman is a fellow journalist that Weston meets at Franklin's Cove. Luckman and Weston discuss Ecotopian politics and the stable state system. Luckman explains it to Weston in great detail. Luckman is a brotherly and friendly sort of guy. He and Weston become good friends.



Vera Allwen

Vera Allwen is a strong but warm woman. She is also the president of Ecotopia. Weston's first glimpse of her is on television at the opening of a new power plant. Weston feels that she may very well be the modern version of Queen Elizabeth.

Max

Max is Weston's editor at the Times-Post. It is Max, along with the approval of the president of the United States, who sends Weston to Ecotopia. The introductory announcement and the announcement at the end of the book are both written from his point of view and "in his hand."

Francine

Francine is Weston's lover when he is not out of town on assignment. They have a rather tenuous relationship, even though they have been seeing each other on and off for three years.

Pat

Pat is Weston's ex-wife. They have two daughters together, but they discovered too late that they were not meant for each other. Weston admits in his journal that it must be tough on his girls and that if he could go back and do it over again, he would not leave.

Fay

Fay is one of Weston's daughters. She is eight years old, and wanted to go along with Weston on the Ecotopia assignment.

Ben

Ben is Marissa's older brother. He is surly and very anti-American. He dislikes Weston from the moment they meet, but much of that has to do with Weston's relationship with Ben's sister. Ben is rude and hostile toward Weston, and controlling toward his sister, but in the end he helps convince Weston to stay.



Objects/Places

Ecotopia

Ecotopia is a North American nation to the Northwest of the United States. It is composed of what used to be Washington, Oregon, and most of Northern California after they seceded from the United States. The people of Ecotopia are environmentally aware. Their laws and practices reflect a deep respect for nature.

Reno

Reno is a small city in Nevada that relies heavily on tourism and gambling. After the secession of Ecotopia, and the resulting decline in business from California, Reno has become a poor and run down version of its former great self.

San Francisco

San Francisco is a large city in California and the capital of Ecotopia in this novel.

New York City

New York City is Weston's home and the home of the Times-Post.

Alviso

Alviso, once a small village, is now one of the new minicities that are being developed to replace the original city structure.

Franklin's Cove

Franklin's Cove is an old warehouse in Redwood City that has been converted into living quarters for writers, journalists, and television people. Weston retreats here after he becomes horribly bored with his hotel.

Core Stores

Core stores are necessity stores in Ecotopia that sell food, clothes, and other necessities.



Picture Phones

Picture phones are video-enabled telephones that the Ecotopians use for communication.

Gross National Product

The Gross National Product (GNP) is the main representation of American economy before it is replaced by the Gross Domestic Product. It is slightly different from GDP. At the time that Ecotopia is written, the GNP is still in use. The GNP is the sum of all profits made in a nation and the profits of all citizens working in other nations, minus the income of foreigners working in that nation over the course of a year. In this book, the Ecotopians are not worried that their annual GNP will fall, as they feel that it is made up mostly of wasteful activity anyways.

The Camp

The forestry camp is a camp of lumberjacks, many of whom are women who work in the forest. They plant and care for trees, but they also do the woodcutting and drive big electric tractors and diesel trucks. In this camp, Weston meets Marissa Brightcloud.



Themes

Oneness With Nature

The idea of being one with nature is a popular theme that plays a central role in this story. The Ecotopians base everything on their stable state system. Under this system, if an object is manufactured, it must be completely recyclable. The Ecotopians shut down the fossil fuel industry almost immediately, and instead of cars, people travel by electric train, bicycle, or on foot. The few cars or trucks that are allowed are completely electric. Instead of coal and gas fire power plants, the Ecotopians rely on a variety of "recyclable" sources, such as water wheels, windmills, and solar panels. They even conduct research looking into electrically tapping the photosynthetic process of plants.

The Ecotopians take the idea of oneness with nature even farther than most in their stable state principle. Everything that is made in Ecotopia, from food to plastics, are completely biodegradable and can be reused after being broken down naturally. They shun anything that is not environment friendly, and see Americans as wasteful and barbaric for our industrial way of life.

Equality of the Sexes

This idea calls for both males and females to be truly equal, and is an important theme of Ecotopian society. In Ecotopia, just as in America, both men and women have the same rights. Unlike in America, they do not have any of the social restrictions on men and women. In Ecotopia, it is not uncommon to see women and men both working together in jobs that are traditionally male only, ranging from heavy construction work to influential business people. In America, while women cannot be discriminated against according to the law, it is not uncommon for women to be passed up for jobs. This is based on the idea that as a woman, she will not be able to handle the physical and/or mental and emotional strains of the job.

In Ecotopia, not only is this not seen in the workplace, but it is also absent from general society. In Ecotopia, it is just as common for women to initiate relationships and sex as it is for men. Women are considered, both by themselves and by men, to be in complete control of their own lives and bodies. In many societies, including our own, women are raised from birth to be wives and mothers. In America and many other parts of the world, every little girl dreams of the day she can move out of her parents' house and get married and start her own family as a wife and mother. This is not the case in Ecotopia, where women are their own people and independent to the point that they seem to Americans as too bold in behavior.

Not only are women considered equal in the above ways, but men too are socially allowed and expected to perform many of the duties that were once solely the social responsibility of women. Not only are men and women equal in their rights, but their



responsibilities as well. Women are expected to take care of themselves just as men, and men are just as responsible for providing care in family and community as women.

Never Alone

The true strength of the Ecotopian society is its strong sense of community. In America, it is uncommon for people who are not good friends or coworkers to communicate at all. This is generally a bit relaxed in some areas, where it is not as uncommon to see someone you have never met before wave at you and wish you a good day, but even then there is no real connection. The Ecotopians seem to consider each other as a sort of extended family. They are very open in their relationships with each other, and seem to have no trouble forming relationships with complete strangers, both temporary and permanent. This sense of universal belonging is due in part to their sense of oneness with nature.

Ecotopians do not live solitary lives, as most Americans do. When a person lives in an Ecotopian community, that person is considered like family to the entire community. No matter where that person goes, his or her roots are firmly planted in that community. This feeling of belonging provides the Ecotopians with the confidence and feeling of security required to have such openness in society. Relationships are not as critical as they are in other societies. While a bad break-up can still be emotionally painful, it does not leave the two people with a feeling of emptiness and being alone that is experienced elsewhere. This causes people in Ecotopia to have less fear of relationships, as well as lower expectations, which may even result in healthier relationships that last longer.

To Americans, the Ecotopians seem too emotional and overly attached to each other. They seem weaker, needing each other as an emotional crutch or perhaps even lewd in behavior for their openness about relationships and sex. On the other hand, Ecotopians see Americans as sadly rootless and directionless, drifting alone through the world without a real home and family.



Style

Point of View

Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston is told entirely in the first person. The antagonist, William Weston, is the narrator for both the journals and the reports. The book is arranged to represent a collection of regular reports and journal entries submitted by a reporter, and so the entire book is from Weston's perspective and gives no special insight into the hearts and minds of other characters other than Weston's own speculation.

This is a narrative delivered by several modes. The author of this book uses description, which is often very detailed, to help the reader see what Weston sees while in Ecotopia, especially in Weston's diary. He also uses the occasional dialog to help demonstrate how Weston is relating to the Ecotopians, and they to him.

The author also uses a few forms of exposition in this story. He uses cause-and-effect to show readers not only what has happened but the reasons for the event. He also uses comparison throughout the story to show how both countries are so different in so many ways and yet so similar in others. The reports are organized by classification, but the journal entries are organized pretty much solely by sequence. Throughout the book, Callenbach uses exposition including to help build the history of his fictitious country over the course of the story, which saves him the trouble of making the infamous information dump to give it all to the reader at once.

Setting

This story, which was written in 1974, takes place in 1999. Washington, Oregon, and most of Northern California have seceded from the union, and have come together as a separate country, Ecotopia. The land is pretty much the same area that we know today, but the political borders are drawn quite differently.

The story begins in New York, but by the second chapter, William Weston takes us to this fictional country, Ecotopia. The remainder of the book follows Weston on his journey across Ecotopia.

During much of the book, Weston stays at Franklin's Cove, usually referred to simply as The Cove. This is an old warehouse in Redwood City that has been converted to living quarters for journalists and writers. He also spends plenty of time with Marissa Brightcloud at a forestry camp. The rest of the time he spends traveling around Ecotopia, recording his observations and feelings for his column and his journal. By the end of the story, Weston has decided to stay in Ecotopia with Marissa.



Language and Meaning

This story is divided into two styles of writing. When combined together, both styles make the flow of the book very odd. It goes from a slow pace in the scientific and political explanations, to a faster-paced and easier read in the more personal observations, speculations, and feelings. It does this exchange back and forth throughout the entire book.

On the one hand, there are the reports that Weston writes and sends off to his editor. These tend to be very descriptive and the language is intentionally impersonal, but not stiff and formal by any means. This is done because these "reports" are being sent off to be published in his column and the best way to describe these sections of the book is to say that they read much like any other newspaper column. For people who really enjoy reading newspaper columns, this would likely be a good steady read. However, for everyone else it does tend to drag by.

On the other hand, there are the journal segments. These are the entries in Weston's personal journal and are never meant to be seen by anyone other than himself. These are of course more personal. The journal entries are filled with descriptions of Weston's feelings and speculations, and it is here that the reader sees the inner heart and mind of William Weston. The language is much more informal and personal in nature. After all, it is only after Weston decides to stay in Ecotopia that he even considers sending the journal off to be published, and then only in the hope that it might help explain his decision. With the combined effect of more casual language and more dramatic content, these sections of the story are a good deal easier to read and do not drag on as the reports do.

Structure

Ecotopia is 167 pages in length and is broken into many smaller sections. Each section represents one of his columns and a segment from his journal. The sections titles are based on what he writes about in each column. The columns are usually only several pages long, but the journal sections range from one page to several pages.

The book represents the whole story that was actually sent in piece by piece over the course of six weeks. Both the journal entries and columns are in chronological order. However, the columns each cover a different subject in Ecotopian life. While the columns tend to deal mostly with facts and physical details, the journal entries deal more with Weston's emotions and his interactions with the people around him.

The obvious plot of the story is Ecotopia. The story shows the development of the nation, the reasons for secession, and how the Ecotopians live 19 years after secession. It shows the many differences as well as some similarities through the eyes of an American from New York. However, there is another story just below the surface. In the journal entries, as well as the subtle changes in his articles, we can see that Weston's time in Ecotopia is changing him. The book also tells the story of the evolution



of one man from an American mindset to an Ecotopian one. The purpose of this book is not only to show one man's idea of how the world should be, but also to show how an American can not only adapt to it, but thrive in it.



Quotes

"In nature, no organic substance is synthesized unless there is provision for its degradation; recycling is enforced."

Introduction, Ecotopia: Quote of Barry Commoner

"My assignment during the next six weeks, therefore, is to explore Ecotopian life from top to bottom - to search out the realities behind the rumors, to describe in concrete detail how Ecotopian society actually operates, to document its problems and, where that is called for, to acknowledge its achievements."

William Weston on His Way to Ecotopia, Ecotopia, page 4: Weston describes his assignment.

"Reno a sad shadow of its former good-times self. With the lucrative California gambling trade cut off by secession, the city quickly decayed. The fancy casino hotels are now mere flophouses - their owners long ago fled to Los Vegas."

From Weston's diary, Ecotopia, page 4: Weston describes Reno after the secession of Ecotopia.

"Maybe they have gone back to the stone age."

The Streets of Ecotopia's Capital, Ecotopia, page 14: Weston begins one of his entries in his diary.

"Let me recommend that, after you have digested it, you follow Ecotopian ways in not wasting it."

Food, Sewage, And "Stable States", Ecotopia, page 20: The Assistant Minister of Food makes a joke about the recycling of sewage.

"The scene was sobering, and made me wonder what a Carthaginian might have felt after ancient Carthage was destroyed and plowed under by the conquering Romans." Car-less Living in Ecotopia's New Towns, Ecotopia, page 28: Weston describes thinks about how different Ecotopia looks from the America that it once was.

"They seem to be in surprisingly good touch with the rest of the world but as far as we're concerned, their strictly on their own - like adolescent children who have rejected their parents' ways. They'll probably get over it."

Car-less Living in Ecotopia's New Towns, Ecotopia, page 29: Weston describes the foreign policy in Ecotopia, and his opinion of their relations with The United States.



Bert: "I mean we don't try to be perfect, we just try to be okay on the average -which means adding up a bunch of ups and downs."

Weston: "But it means giving up any notions of progress. You just want to get to that stable point and stay there, like a lump."

Bert: "It may sound that way, but in practice there's no stable point. We're always striving to approximate it, but we never get there."

Car-less Living in Ecotopia's New Towns, Ecotopia, page 31: Bert Luckman further explains the stable state system to Weston.

"American sports fans would have a miserable time of it in Ecotopia. They would find no baseball and no football, no basketball, not even ice hockey."

The Unsporting Life of Ecotopia, Ecotopia, page 34: Weston describes the Ecotopian idea of sports.

"Well, nature has equipped us well, and we lead active physical lives,"

The Unsporting Life of Ecotopia, Ecotopia, page 35: Weston describes the physical condition of the Ecotopians and compares them to the average people in other countries.

"Look," she said after a bit, "if you just want to fuck why don't you say so?" and marched off in disgust.

The Unsporting Life of Ecotopia, Ecotopia, page 42: Weston is confused by the women of Ecotopia, and sexually frustrated.

"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."

The Ecotopian Economy: Fruit of Crisis, Ecotopia, page 44: Weston sums up the Ecotopian idea of man's place in the world.

"This was news to me: no Ecotopians I've met so far have seemed to give much of a damn about relations with the U.S. one way or the other."

The Ecotopian Economy: Fruit of Crisis, Ecotopia, page 48: Weston describes his surprise that he has met someone who wants to improve relations with the United States.

"Seemed to me a ravishing presence in a way I have never before encountered. Not exactly beautiful, at least by my usual standards. But sometimes, when she looks at me, my hair stands up as if I'm confronting a creature who's wild and incomprehensible, animal and human at once. Eyes dark brown, and hard to fathom."



The Ecotopian Economy: Fruit of Crisis Diary Entry, Ecotopia, page 52 and 53: Weston describes Marissa in the bath.

"I've decided not to come back, Max. you'll understand why from the notebook. But thank you for sending me on this assignment, when neither you nor I knew where it might lead. It led me home."

Editors' Epilogue, Ecotopia, page 167: Weston tells Max of his decision to stay in Ecotopia and says goodbye.

Topics for Discussion

One of the central themes of this story is oneness with nature. List three examples from the book of how the Ecotopians have adapted their modern society to fit their environmentally friendly ideals. How successful are these attempts? What other ways would you have dealt with the same problems?

The Ecotopians boast many types of environmentally friendly energy sources, from solar power to tapping the photosynthetic energy of plants. Which of these would make practical energy sources for our world today, and which would be impractical? Please explain your reasoning for each source. Also, if any of them are practical and affordable, then why are fossil fuels still being used?

Callenbach gave this story the structure of a collection of writings from a reporter. Out of all of the ways that a narrative fiction could be written, he chose to break it into reports and journal entries that are written in first person view by an American reporter visiting a foreign country. What reason or reasons might he have to write about Ecotopia in this style? If you could rewrite this story, would you choose a different style or the same? Why?

The four rhetorical modes of writing are exposition, argumentation, description, and narration. Which mode or modes are used in this story, and how? List at least one example of each mode you find in the book, and explain what reason Callenbach might have had for using it.

Choose one civilization from history that had similar love and reverence for nature. Compare this real historical civilization to the fictional civilization of Ecotopia. In what ways are they similar? How do they differ?

In what ways does Weston change personally throughout the story? What makes him decide to stay in Ecotopia? In what ways might Marissa have affected his decision?

Toward the end of the book, Weston has a discussion with the Ecotopian President. They both express desire for renewed relations between the two countries, but neither of them think it will be easy. When the story ends, the only thing they agree upon is that the two governments should talk. Describe a few problems with the relations between Ecotopia and the United States. How might the two governments work out their problems? Can these problems be resolved or not?