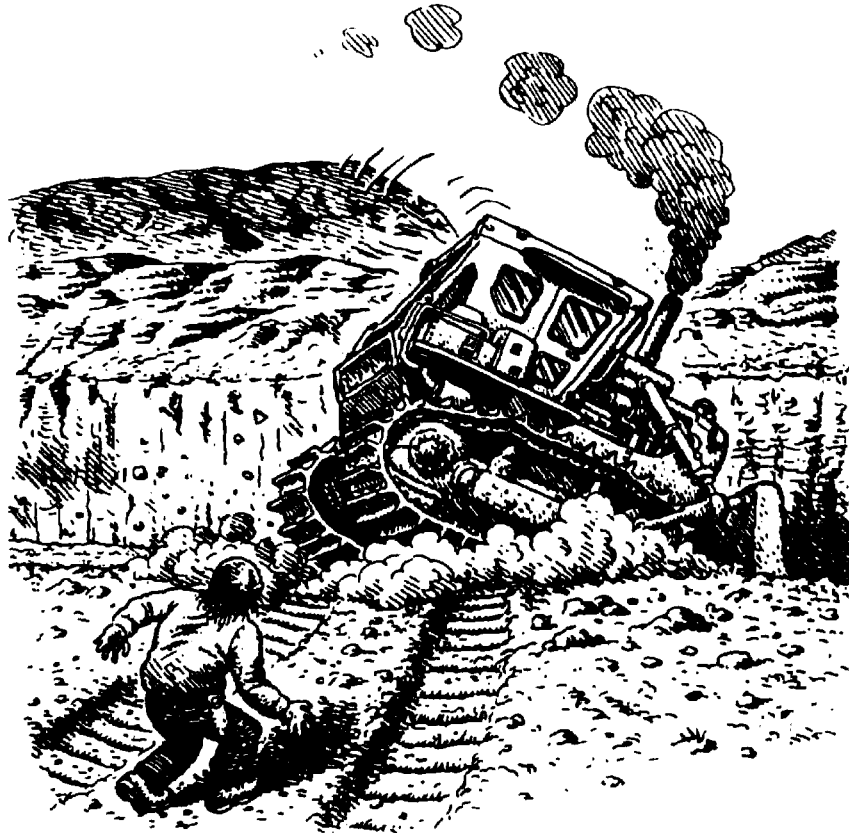


Somebody Has to Do It:

Fighting the Machine in Edward Abbey's

***The Brave Cowboy, The Monkey Wrench Gang
and Hayduke Lives!***



Masters of Arts thesis for the
Cand. Philol. degree

by
Tim Arne Hope

University of Bergen
English Department
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I think that I shall never see
A billboard lovely as a tree
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall,
I'll never see a tree at all.

"Song of the Open Road" (1933)

-Ogden Nash

Contents

<u>Acknowledgements</u>	iv
<u>Chapter 1: Introduction: The Writer</u>	
-Thesis Approach	1
-Abbey's Literary Credo	3
-Abbey's Critics	10
<u>Chapter 2: The novels</u>	
- <i>The Brave Cowboy</i> (1956)	13
- <i>The Monkey Wrench Gang</i> (1975)	16
- <i>Hayduke Lives!</i> (1990)	22
<u>Chapter 3: Nature and The Machine</u>	
-The Wilderness	30
-The Juniper	36
-The Vulture	38
-Water and Rivers	40
-The Machine	45
-The Cities	51
-The Authorities	56
<u>Chapter 4: The Monkeywrenchers!</u>	
-Who They Are	
-Jack Burns	62
-George Washington Hayduke	67
-Erika and the Earth Firsters	71
-Why They All Do It	76
-How They All Do It	82
<u>Bibliography</u>	95

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The cover illustration is drawn by R. Crumb and found on page 116a in the illustrated version of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* published in 1991 (1985) by Roaming The West, Salt Lake City.

CHAPTER ONE

The Writer

Thesis Approach

"I have written much about many good places.
But the best places of all, I have never mentioned."
-Edward Abbey

My main focus in this thesis will be to show how and why some of the characters in three of Abbey's novels fight their enemy, the Machine. I have chosen to discuss Abbey's *The Brave Cowboy* (1956), *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), and its sequel *Hayduke Lives!* (1990) since they are some of the most important novels concerning means to fight the Machine.

In this first chapter I will present Edward Abbey as the author of the novels, as I have experienced that he still is quite unknown to most people. Avoiding to end up with a whole biography, I have chosen to concentrate the introduction to two themes. The first will present Edward Abbey's reasons for writing the way he saw it, while the second part will point to how his books were received by his critics, and how Abbey reacted to it.

Chapter Two will introduce the three novels in general, discussing their point of departure, themes and intentions, in relation to my thesis statement. In this chapter I will also include comments on the novels by Abbey and his reviewers.

The third chapter will trace different aspects of nature that appear in the novels. The wilderness, junipers, vultures, and rivers all contribute to the experience of nature in their special way. And threatened by the advancing Machine, they are worth defending. However, on another level these elements of nature may also represent notions of anarchism, rebellion, environmentalism, and freedom, notions that are emphasized by some of the characters. Edward

Abbey's anger towards the authorities of modern society is expressed in all the texts. The second half of the same chapter, will deal with how the novels portray various parts of the Machine. The Machine is expressed in different ways in the three novels. We see it in the dinosaurian bulldozers, the polluted cities, and in corrupted authorities who have already digested the East Coast, and are now aiming towards the pure Southwestern landscape.

The fourth and final chapter, "The Monkeywrenchers!," will deal with how the novels justify fighting the enemy. The chapter will also discuss the most prominent monkeywrencher in each novel by looking at their main characteristics, and why and how they fight the Machine. To represent a fighter from *The Brave Cowboy*, Jack Burns is the very man. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the four idealists fight for the same cause. However, it is natural to point out George Washington Hayduke since he is the true monkeywrencher, an outstanding representative for the business. His three close friends will be referred to frequently in the other two sub-parts of the chapter. In *Hayduke Lives!*, I will comment on the Scandinavian girl Erika, her friends in Earth First!, and their strategy in fighting the Machines.

In the second part of the chapter I will discuss the reasons *why* the monkeywrenchers do what they can to defend the wilderness. Finally, I will discuss what is meant by ecotage and *how* it is expressed in the texts and approached by the characters in the novels. In addition, the chapter will focus on the difference between civil disobedience, what some people call terrorism, and monkeywrenching, and how the actual monkey wrench business is justified.

Edward Abbey's Literary Credo

"...it's better to write the truth for a small audience
than tell lies for a big one."

-Edward Abbey

"Society is like a stew. If you don't keep it stirred up, you get a lot of scum on top," said Edward Abbey introducing his spirit of rebellion (Abbey 1990b, 21). This spirit, fueled by his anarchist philosophy, together with the themes of environmentalism, is deeply rooted in all of Abbey's texts. And in his essay called "A Writer's Credo," Abbey concludes with several reasons for writing.

"Why write? How justify this mad itch for scribbling?" he asks at first, but answers: "Speaking for myself, I write to entertain my friends and to exasperate our enemies" (Abbey 1988, 177). Abbey's friends in this case, would be all those who subscribe to the same values as Abbey did, such as respecting nature and being skeptical to the authorities. All Edward Abbey's texts carry within them a wish to "challenge, provoke to force the reader to think, feel, react, make choices" (Abbey 1994, 284). This challenge is what makes them entertaining. Much of the humor in the novels is based on Abbey's way of making fun of, provoking, and ridiculing the American authorities. He was, however, often controversial even among fellow writers. Abbey was once invited to contribute an article to a magazine under the condition that it had to be "non-controversial." "How can anything of any genuine intellectual interest to grown-ups be "non-controversial"?" he said, and did not contribute (330).

Abbey's literal language and style challenges the reader. In his texts, Abbey has a way of being quick, crusty, sharp, and to the point in one moment, only to switch to eloquent elaborations and alliterations in the next. As author Charles Bowden, too, has noticed, Abbey's style is more or less "vernacular" making "his writing look offhanded" while it actually is very thorough (Bishop 1994, 244). His literary style of going straight to the point was and is quite different

compared to many of his fellow writers. Abbey attacked them for being too circumstantial, for lacking the vital spark of life in their texts, and for their lack of interest in social issues. In a journal entry from 1983 Abbey writes:

Borges, Nabokov, Joyce, Proust, Kafka, James et al, gave us elaborate wind-up whirligigs.... I greatly admire their fantastic inventions, but could not possibly emulate them, and do not think they serve the high moral purpose of our greatest literature. As Faulkner said, "They write good, but they don't seem to have anything to say. (Abbey 1994, 306)

Abbey was proud, yet maybe a bit surprised that all his books, except his first novel, stayed in print. He did not always get the best reviews in the East Coast newspapers, but Abbey would joke about it saying that his books nevertheless made "the best-seller lists in Wolf Hole, Arizona, and Hanksville, Utah" (Abbey 1990b, 60). Not much has been written and published about Edward Abbey and his works except for a pamphlet by Garth McCann in 1982, a literary study by Ann Ronald in 1982, a biography written by James Bishop jr. in 1994, and some articles and edited letters. Abbey was quite offended several times by what seemed to be a lack of interest in him, and he would think of himself as "America's most famous unknown arthur" [sic] (Abbey 1994, 312). However, a year before he died, Abbey wrote in his journal: "In writing I speak only for myself. But in speaking only for myself, I have discovered, through the years and to my delight, that I speak also for hundreds of thousands of *others*" (338).

His novels become a fusion of politics, ideology and "action" when themes are introduced both explicitly and implicitly in his novels. Reading Abbey literally when he states "My favorite animal is the crocodile, my favorite bird is the fly, my favorite bush the cactus" is misinterpreting the author (245). What Abbey wants to do is to challenge the reader's norms by questioning our perception of reality and truth. His direct statements could often lead to fury among fellow writers, readers and critics, though Abbey enjoyed bringing up "forbidden ideas" of "racial, sexual, cultural differences" (305). He spoke straight

from his heart saying things that were not considered politically correct. And where others did not dare to utter such ideas, Abbey went a step further, he wrote them down. Once he wrote "Humankind will not be free until the last Kremlin commissar is strangled with the entrails of the last Pentagon chief of staff" (Abbey 1990b, 30).¹

Speaking of his motives for writing, Abbey says "I write to record the truth of our time as best as I can see it" (Abbey 1988, 177). The novels I will be discussing are all written in accordance with what Abbey regarded as "truth." He used fiction as a medium to tell the truth the way he saw it. "I report exactly what I see - and truth is never popular," he said (Abbey 1994, 306). Subscribing to Walt Whitman's anarchistic creed "resist much, obey little," Abbey's arguments were often in sharp contrast with the authoritarian conviction. During the course of his literary career, Abbey became much more certain that he was the only one capable of reporting the truth in the world. According to him, very few authors dared face the Government siding with the individual. In his journal, dated March 12th 1986, Abbey writes:

In our time, in our Amerika [sic], too many of our poets novelists essayists seem to be taking the side of the State in that ancient and inevitable conflict between the State and the independent individual. This is wrong; that is not the natural place for a writer.
(326)

It is the writer's duty, according to Abbey, to report what may seem self-evident, but it is even more important to write about what is not self-evident and which one party may want to suppress and conceal. Only the responsible and involved writer can make such statements. Therefore, Abbey saw himself as one of the very few honest writers. In another journal entry from May 28th 1988, Abbey wrote a note to his fellow American writers: "What a gutless pack of

¹ Writing to provoke, Abbey was fired as editor of the student newspaper *Thunderbird*, at the University of New Mexico in 1951. On the front page, Abbey had printed Diderot's quote "Man will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest," mockingly attributed to Louisa May Alcott.

invertebrates you mostly are. What a fawning groveling... cowardly moral jellyfish you are! Banana slugs of literature!" (343). Abbey felt he should stop being "so mean to so many other writers. It will do me no good," he said, "in either the long or short run. But damn, I do like to say what I think. Nobody else does. In a nation of sheep, one brave man is a majority" (310). In this respect, the most honest writer in Abbey's opinion was the independent writer, the ones who worked on a free-lance basis. Such authors dare to speak truth to powers, as their income do not derive from any authoritarian public or private institution, but directly from his, or her, independent work.

Abbey also wrote "to oppose, resist, and sabotage the contemporary drift toward a global technocratic police state, whatever its ideological coloration" (Abbey 1988, 177-178). He felt morally obligated as a writer and philosopher to question answers rather than answer questions. To him, a writer's task was "to be impertinent, insolent, and, if necessary, subversive" (Abbey 1990b, 64). Abbey's Masters thesis in philosophy, called "Anarchy and the Morality of Violence," was submitted to the University of New Mexico in 1956, and drew suspicion from the authorities. The two years Abbey served as a Military Policeman in the army from 1945 to 1947 had taught him to distrust any large institutions. When he came back to Pennsylvania from Italy, Abbey returned his honorable discharge papers to the war department. A short time later he put up a note on a bulletin board at the Indiana State Teachers College in Indiana, Pennsylvania, calling students and staff to burn or return their draft credentials. Two professors, one economist and one reverend signed besides Abbey. His subversiveness led to extended reports in the archives of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Their first report on Abbey was filed in 1947, on what the FBI called a civil disobedience act. The growing pile of records and files were kept in FBI's possession until 1982, when they were sent to Abbey. The dossier contained reports about Abbey's burned draft letter at the Teachers College in Pennsylvania, his presence at an international conference in Vienna, and some

interviews with anonymous informants who through “130 pages of tedious dithering” described Abbey as “‘polite,’ ‘quiet,’ ‘well-liked,’ ‘argumentative,’ ‘quarrelsome,’ etc.” (Abbey 1994, 279). In spite of the fact that Abbey was aware of the FBI’s surveillance, he continued to write texts that expressed subversive attitudes towards institutions and the government, but he never went into details about his personal involvement in ecotage².

His famous collection of essays from 1968, *Desert Solitaire*, contains 18 closely linked essays all structured to follow the national park season from April through September. In one of these essays, Abbey questions man’s striving towards an urban technocratic culture which he opposed. In his opinion

civilization is the vital force in human history; culture is that inert mass of institutions and organizations which accumulate around and tend to drag down the advance of life.... Civilization is mutual aid and self-defence; culture is the judge, the lawbook and the forces of Law & Ordure.... Civilization is the wild river; culture, 592,000 tons of cement; Civilization flows, culture thickens and coagulates, like tired, sick, stifled blood. (246)

In *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey openly attacks the tourist industry, the National Park Service, the Department of the Interior and even the Government itself. Through his stories, anecdotes and digressions we are served evidence of an apparently indifferent country, represented both by its people and its Government. It is Abbey’s aim to enlighten the ignorant reader of the destructiveness of culture. In his texts, by turning the cultural instability of his community up against a sane wilderness, Abbey wanted to restate the importance of what he understood as nature as a credible reality. “I sometimes chose to think,” Abbey says, “that man is a dream, thought an illusion, and only rock is real. Rock and sun” (194).

Abbey wished to “write to oppose injustice, to defy power, and to speak for the voiceless” (Abbey 1988, 178). In Abbey’s opinion the voiceless were all those who faced injustice, struggled against a superior force, or were

² In his preface Christopher Manes defines ecotage as “ecologically motivated sabotage” (Manes 1990, xi).

threatened in the name of "progress." Abbey was not content with the authority's law and order. "Law and *Justice* is what I want. To hell with order. To hell with the law! I'll settle for justice, though the heavens fall" (Abbey 1994, 258). Besides justice, he wanted freedom for the soul, the saguaro, the spinning spider and whole Southwest.

"To honor life and to praise the divine beauty of the natural world" was another of Abbey's many literary creeds (Abbey 1988, 178). His books of non-fiction celebrate nature and wilderness in their description of landscape, plants and animals. But those who read Abbey's texts as plain botanic and topographic descriptions will miss most of Abbey's philosophy and ethical statements, and instead become preoccupied with some of his paradoxes and contradictions. Wanting to protect wildlife and landscape, he has been criticized for killing a rabbit, and for polluting the canyons with empty beer-cans and rubber tires. Abbey speaks for himself and says:

I am accused of being a hater. What those two-bit book reviewers cannot see is that every hate implies a corresponding love. I.e., I hate asphalt because I love grass. I hate militarism because I love liberty and dignity. I hate the ever-expanding industrial megamachine because I love agrarianism, wilderness and wildlife, human freedom, etc.ETC!." (Abbey 1994, 310)

Abbey's main concern was for the human nature which he saw was increasingly endangering the land thereby undermining its own existence. To him it was man and his culture that was in the greatest jeopardy, not the environment, and he was convinced that the planet would heal itself through fire, flood and volcanism as it always had. This concept separates Abbey from many contemporary environmentalists who proclaim that their aim is to save the planet. Abbey, however, regarded all equal whether animate or inanimate, humans included.

Edward Abbey died of cirrhosis of the liver on March 14th 1989 near Tucson Arizona. He had left strict funeral instructions for his family and friends to follow.

Even his burial was illegal, disregarding all state laws and regulations regarding burials. "No undertakers; no embalming (for godsake!); no coffin. ...an old sleeping bag or a tarp will do.... But bury me if possible; I want my body to help fertilize the growth of a cactus, or a cliffrose, or sagebrush, or tree, etc." (276). That was the way he wanted it, and that was the way it was.

Up until his death Abbey had written about 21 books. His first novel, *Jonathan Troy* (1954), is the only book that is out of print. His career as a writer spanned four decades in which he wrote a number of poems, articles and essays in addition to the novels. Abbey's last novel, *Hayduke Lives!* was published posthumously in 1990. An edited version of Abbey's 17 journals, dating from November 1951 when Abbey studied in Scotland, to the last entry only two weeks before he died in March 1989, was published in 1994. Both the collection of poems and the journals have been edited by Abbey's good friend David Petersen. John Macrae recently published *Serpents of Paradise* which includes passages from most of Abbey's texts. After his success with *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Abbey became an example and a "larger than life" figure for thousands of environmentalists and readers, and launched a national cult movement. In a journal entry from 1976 Edward Abbey wrote "T-shirts, posters, postcards, arm patches: on becoming a 'cult hero'" (Abbey 1994, 246). Even if Edward Abbey did not approve of too much publicity and commercialized promotion, he stated that "On the other hand, who's going to buy my books if nobody's ever heard of me?" (255). A number of calendars, bumper-stickers, and books later, Abbey still draws attention and readers to the battle between preservation and ruination of the Southwestern desert landscape. Six years after his death, an Abbey-web was set up on the Internet promoting his books and ideas.

Two of Abbey's novels have been made into screen versions. Abbey's second novel, *The Brave Cowboy* (1956), was released as the movie *Lonely are the Brave* in 1962, starring Kirk Douglas. Abbey's third novel, *Fire on the*

Mountain (1962), was presented in a television version for NBC in 1981. Abbey's novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) is still under option by movie companies in Hollywood.

All of Abbey's novels, except *Jonathan Troy*, have their setting in the Southwestern region. He was truly inspired by the Southwestern wilderness which was one of the reasons why he wrote so devotedly about it. "I sometimes suspect I might have been a better writer" said Abbey in an interview, "if I'd stayed back East; it's a lot easier to sit indoors there.... But I don't think I'd be so happy a man" (Solheim 1989, 95). The comfort and pleasure of writing and living in the Southwest made him fight so wholeheartedly for it.

Abbey's Critics

"Critics are like ticks on a dog or tilts on a motor:
ornamental but dysfunctional."
-Edward Abbey

Abbey's sole literary ambition was to write one good and long novel, "*The Fat Masterpiece*" (Abbey 1991, xii). Once his masterpiece was written he wished to "retire to my hut in the desert, assume the lotus position, compose my mind and senses, and sink into meditation, contemplating my novel" (Abbey 1990b, 58). He always said that his latest book was the best, striving to make the next even better. And he knew, as do all authors, that good reviews were important for selling books. However, Abbey was not fully appreciated by all reviewers, "especially [not] back East" (Solheim 1989, 99). Abbey thought writing about the West was a disadvantage. "It is hard to get critics and reviewers to take any book with a western setting seriously. They're always tempted to dismiss it as some kind of *western literature*" Abbey stated in an interview (Hepworth 1989,

42). In this case *they* were his "favorite coterie of enemies... the East Coast literati" (Abbey 1990b, 58). The only public award he ever got was \$5,000 from the American Institute of Arts and Letters. However, Abbey did not accept the award when he heard that, in order to receive it, he had to come to New York. "Guess I won't [go]. Too little, too late" he said (Abbey 1994, 331).

Especially after he wrote *Desert Solitaire*, Abbey was labeled a "nature writer" by critics as well as by environmental activists, who made him their example. Abbey, however, despised all attempts at definition, and some of the things he said and wrote makes it difficult to label him as one thing or another. In addition, he felt that the critics did not have an understanding of either his style or his themes. "For some reason, my books are always given for review to nature writers, naturalists, etc., who have only a dim comprehension of what I'm about" Abbey said, and continued: "Just *once* I'd like to see a book of mine reviewed - favorably or unfavorably - by one of my *peers!*" (314). Abbey was frustrated by the treatment from various newspapers and journals. In a journal entry from as far back as 1964, he comments on some of the criticism:

Bastards, they're still tryin' to sink me. *Down the River* rejected by Dial ("diffuse and meaningless"), Grove (no comment), Scribners ("too simple, too easy, tedious, piled-up lists, Kovalckick's tedious fundamentalism, values at odds beneath all the raucousness and tired reductions, banal etc."), and McGraw-Hill ("most disappointing, a good writer gone badly wrong, the less said the better"). (187)

Even though these attacks and rejections came at an early stage in his writing career, Abbey never quit. He always felt that there were a few more books that had to be written, "if not for the good of the world, then at least for my own fucking sense of honor" he said (250). In addition to writing books, Abbey spent a lot of time writing letters and articles to various magazines where he seemed to get a better response. This way, he earned some income, and managed to establish himself as a fruitful Southwestern writer. But his novels were still met with harsh critique by the reviewers. In another journal entry, this time from

1983, the criticism continues the ones from 1964:

David Roberts, in the *Boston Globe*, calls my fiction "sappy" and "cartoonish." Swinel "S.C." in *National Review* called *Abbey's Road* "smug and graceless." Denise Drabelle in *Nation* called me "puerile, arrogant, xenophobic, dopey" and - I forget what else. (286)

In the mid 1980s, Abbey became painfully aware of a disease that was slowly killing him. From this point on, he was concerned that he might not have time to write all the books he wanted, and that the ones he did write would not be fully appreciated.

Despite the rough treatment by many reviewers and publishers, Abbey gained recognition from fellow writers as well as from the readers. Several of his books were reprinted and Abbey's books sold quite well. They also drew attention to the Southwestern desert. In the last entry of his journal dated only two weeks before he died, Abbey wrote what he thought were the reasons why the reviewers hated his books:

Almost all reviewers, these days, are members of and adherents to some anxious particular sect or faction.... As such, any member of any one of these majority minorities is going to find *for certain* a few remarks in any of *my* books that will offend/enrage "s/he" to the marrow, leading inevitably in turn, on the part of such sectarian book reviewers, to a denunciation not merely of the offending passage, but of the *entire book*, and not merely of the book, but of the author too. (352-353)

Chuck Bowden writes, in the epilogue of Bishop's Abbey-biography, "In a way, I hope I never have to write about him again. Oh well, the hell with it. Abbey can take care of himself. He always has." (Bishop 1994, 244). Abbey was never afraid to speak of his mind, to defy power, and defend the weak and voiceless from that same power structure. In fact, that was what Abbey wanted, and that was what he did.

CHAPTER TWO

The Novels

The Brave Cowboy:

Initiating the developing themes of anarchism and environmentalism

He dismounted, taking a pair of fencing pliers from one of the saddlebags, and pushed his way through banked-up tumbleweeds to the fence. He cut the wire...
-*The Brave Cowboy*

Two years after the rather unsuccessful publication of *Jonathan Troy*, Abbey published *The Brave Cowboy* in 1956. Set in 1949, *The Brave Cowboy* tells the story of Jack Burns, an anachronistic, 29 year old cowboy who has "fallen to herding sheep" (26)³. The tale opens with the cowboy "sitting on his heels in the cold light of the dawn, drawing pale flames through a handful of twigs and dry crushed grass" (3). The opening with the hero and his horse alone in the open desert is what Tompkins calls a typical opening of a "Western movie" (Tompkins 1992, 69). Having heard that his friend Paul Bondi waits in Duke City jail to be transported to a two year imprisonment for draft resistance, Burns sets off to free his friend. In order to aid Bondi, the brave cowboy picks a fight in a bar, gets arrested and ends up in the same cell as his friend. Bringing with him hacksaw-blades hidden in his boots, Jack Burns reveals his plan: "The idea now is to break out before they break you" (Abbey 1992a, 100). Failing his attempt to persuade Bondi to escape with him, Burns breaks out of jail only to end up on the run tailed by the sheriff's office, an Air Force helicopter, and an Indian tracker. After a rousing chase, Burns and his stubborn mare Whisky manage to escape to a forest plateau south of Duke City. Their luck ends

³ As a matter of curiosity, it is interesting to note that Abbey, too, was 29 years old when *The Brave Cowboy* was published.

abruptly when, crossing the highway in the rainy night, they are struck by a tractor-trailer carrying bathroom fixtures.⁴ *The Brave Cowboy* starts out as a typical Western story with an independent hero, followed by the problem he has to overcome, and how he goes about finding a solution. The end, however, challenges the common Western as the hero's final experience is a tragic one.

The Brave Cowboy was the novel that gave Edward Abbey the confidence he needed to continue as a writer. He had thought about the book a few years earlier, but had had difficulties with its credibility. "How can he [Jack Burns] hope to persuade Bondi to give up his martyrdom in prison for the ridiculous life of the outlaw?" Abbey writes in his journal, "Yet that is exactly what he proposes.... Impossible. Not credible" (1994, 120). The discussion between Bondi and Burns, on whether Bondi should escape or not, is of considerable length in the novel. In these pages, the philosophy of anarchism is introduced and discussed.

In addition to its early anarchist- flavored criticism of the American society, *The Brave Cowboy* also pays tribute to individualism and environmental ideas. In the novel the neon wilderness of the urban social institutions is seen in opposition to the open desert landscape and to the individual's rights. Jack Burns demands and represents individual freedom. And in the novel, there are two means of resistance to the authorities. The 'passive,' as Paul Bryant calls it, is represented by the egocentric Paul Bondi who chooses to subjugate the government by imposing a two year sentence on himself instead of challenging them (Bryant 1989, 40). "'But good lord, Jack - it *is* two years, not a lifetime.... But surely two years in prison is better than a whole lifetime as a haunted man.' 'Not for me,' Burns said" (Abbey 1992a, 99). The other means, represented by Burns, is the 'active' resistance. Believing in his abilities as an individual, Burns

⁴Abbey felt that the end of the first Dodd Mead edition was too closed, "change ending - ambiguity 'death' of the Cowboy, delete the word 'dead' - etc." he wrote in his journal (1994, 177). In later editions, of *The Brave Cowboy*, Jack Burns is only injured and later re-appears in several of Abbey's novels, including *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*.

states, "Nothin can hurt me; I'm like water: boil me away and I come back in the next thunderhead" (27). He subverts and confronts the establishment by refusing to conform to their laws which restricts the freedom of individuals. His first proof of success is the absence of a social security number and draft card among his scanty possessions. In fact he has no "driver's license, no social security card, no discharge card, no registration card, no insurance card; no identification at all" (67-68). Both Bondi's and Burns' attempts to resist fail. Bondi's resistance is futile because the authorities are not aware of his personal protest. And Burns' strive for freedom ends abruptly as he is struck while running for the sanctuary in the hills.

The novel warns that there might not be any more room in the American society for an independent "...cowboy who must negotiate tarmac and barbed wire [and] prefers his...horse to a limousine, who prefers open hills to the concrete town" (Calder 1974, 20). The authorities are no longer willing to tolerate that individuals are becoming a threat to law and order. Therefore they sacrifice the individual's freedom and tries to make them conform into "decent citizens."

The environmental tone is set at the beginning. The increasing deterioration threatening the desert landscape, which Austin's warns of in her *The Land of Little Rain* fifty-three years earlier, is present in *The Brave Cowboy*. The novel tells of a the currently vanishing desert. It does its best to express the necessity of the wilderness as a vital sanctuary, by questioning future developments in the name of "progress" which it claims are imposed by the East on the West. The authorities' lack of consideration, which the novel warns against, result in the destruction of the land. The deterioration of the wilderness occurs through a developing expansion of military areas for nuclear testing, powerful ranching interests, and by polluted rivers and smoggy town centers. The novel stress that it is vital for human nature, and by implication, also for human culture, that the environment be protected as a politically neutral sanctuary for everyone. It is

only possible to maintain a sensible culture by means of a sane human nature. And in novels such as *The Brave Cowboy*, society is the usurper.

With the publication of *The Brave Cowboy*, Abbey's novel caught the attention of Hollywood. In 1962, a movie version of the novel was released starring Kirk Douglas as the brave cowboy. Abbey only received a \$7,500 cheque and a bit part in the movie as a deputy-sheriff. His movie debut, as Bishop fails to notice, was later edited out (Bishop 1994, 101). Abbey was at first flattered by his novel being made into a movie. Later, however, he felt that too many revisions had been made: the prologue was dropped, the title changed, and many of Abbey's main arguments were never discussed.

The Monkey Wrench Gang:

Celebrating environmental activism and individual freedom

On the beach near Separation Wash the men swore to one another
the pledge of eternal comradeship, sealing the oath with bourbon
and with the blood drawn by the nick of Hayduke's Buck knife from
their outstretched palms. Bonnie, aloof in the empyrean of the weed,
smiled at the ceremony but was tacitly included nonetheless.
By campfire under midnight stars three thousand feet below
the rim of the Shivwits Plateau the Monkey Wrench Gang was born....
- *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

During a final raft trip down the Colorado River in Glen Canyon during the construction of the Glen Canyon dam in the summer of 1959, Abbey and his friend Ralph Newcomb discussed "how much dynamite...would be needed to destroy the dam" (Abbey 1994, 152). The construction of Glen Canyon Dam was to Abbey tantamount to the destruction of the whole Southwestern landscape he regarded as home. And the destruction led to a literary crusade for Abbey where he wished to use his essays and novels to "tell the world"

about the desecration of the land. "I objected to it because it destroyed one of the most beautiful canyons in the world. A canyon I think equal in beauty, grandeur, importance to the Grand Canyon, quite different but equally beautiful," Abbey states in Temple's video (Temple 1993, 14 min.). At this early stage Abbey had thought of writing "The Wooden Shoe Gang (or) The Monkey Wrench Mob (a novel about the "Wilderness Avenger" and his desperate band; sabotage and laughter and wild wild fun)" (Abbey 1994, 185). But it was not until 1975 that his most famous novel was published.

The Monkey Wrench Gang tells the story of four people who came to unite for the fight against a "megalomaniacal megamachine" (Abbey 1992b, 139). Using friends as inspiration for the characters in the novel, Abbey introduces us to Dr. Sarvis in the first chapter of the novel. Sarvis is a rich 50-year-old general surgeon with a weakness for Baskin-Robbins girls and for burning billboards. To help him on his "routine neighborhood beautification project," he is aided by his girlfriend who is a liberated 29 year old named Bonnie Abzug (7). She is the bright, sexy girl from the Bronx who has a major in French literature and who really wants "to wreck something" and not just "sit... in the dark making owl noises" (70). Third member of the gang is Joseph "Seldom Seen" Smith, who got his nickname from his three wives. He is a jack Mormon and river guide who's dream is to blow up Glen Canyon Dam using houseboats loaded with ammonium nitrate. The quartet is completed with the inventive 25 year old ex-Green Beret George Washington Hayduke⁵ who believes in guns, dynamite, and freedom, instead of believing in safety. "It was people like Hayduke who gave beards a bad name" (47) and made "Darwin right," we are told (161). Measuring mileage in Schlitz six-packs, always swearing and getting carried away, Hayduke roams around in the four-corner region on the hunt for a

⁵ On page 169 in *Hayduke Lives!* we are given the etymology of Hayduke's last name; "Hayduke. Heiduk:... (Hung. *hzei*, beyond, outside of < *djuzk*, wall, enclosure, sty), 1. bandit, brigand, outlaw. 2. rebel soldier, insurgent, guerrilla warrior." Other references to Hayduke's name are found in James Bishop's biography (1994, 129), and in Abbey's journals (1994, 244).

bulldozer to put out of action.

The gang's first raid along the border between Utah and Arizona leaves a trail of burned-out diesel Caterpillars. These machines become symbols of the technological development and are easy targets for any ecotage activity. Later, having gained more experience, the Monkey Wrench Gang set out to blow up a coal train, power lines and several bridges. Hayduke, who has to be kept in check by the others, states, "My job is to save the fucking wilderness. I don't know anything else worth saving" (190). Unexpectedly Jack Burns, from *The Brave Cowboy*, re-appears wearing "a big bandanna draped outlaw-style over the nose, mouth and chin" ready to assist when needed (199). The Gang's raids become more sophisticated, but also more difficult to carry out as they are chased by the corrupt and right-wing Mormon Bishop Love and his vigilante Search & Rescue Team. Being chased across the region, the four monkeywrenchers are finally tracked down. They get arrested, each in turn, except Hayduke. In order to avoid being captured, he stages his own death by successfully faking a jump from a canyon rim and escapes. This is the main story of the novel that sold more than 270,000 copies its first four years.

The National Observer wrote in its review of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* in 1975 that "The Monkey Wrench Gang is a sad, hilarious, exuberant, vulgar fairy tale... part adventure story, part melodrama part tragedy stuffed with huge chunks of information about the wilderness, survival, and industrial wastelands" (Frank 1975, 17). There is no doubt that *The Monkey Wrench Gang* can be read as a fairy tale and as an adventure story with its fast-moving narrative, nifty word-play, and lavish descriptions. Even though the dialogue may at times be similar to the short, simple, and witty often found in comic books, the serious undertones of the novel indicate that this book is meant to be more than plain entertainment. There is no doubt that the novel's objective is to present means of radical sabotage, as well as to challenge the general reader to take a stand in environmental matters.

Trying to get credit for monkey wrench activities in the Southwest, Abbey stated that: "It is true that some of my fiction was based on actual events. But the events took place after the fiction was written" (1990b, 58). This is, however, only a partial truth, and Abbey must not be given the credit of having invented monkeywrenching, even though he coined the term and was one of the first to use it as a major scene in his books. Dave Foreman points out in his book *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, that "Abbey based *The Monkey Wrench Gang* on the real-life operations of several groups and individuals in the Southwest during the late 1960s and early 1970s" (1991, 119). For example, the chapter in *Hayduke Lives!* called "The Cleaning Lady," is inspired by a citizen outlaw who operated in the Chicago area under the nickname "The Fox." During one of his many ecotage activities in the 1970s, he threw a bucket of toxic industrial waste into the private office of a company's chairman. His identity has never been revealed. There were also several other small groups, operating under names such as "Billboard Bandits," and "Bolt Weevils," who saw it as their duty to cut down billboards or dismantle power lines. Although the novel contains stories based on "real" monkey wrench activity, there is no doubt that the novel's many detailed descriptions of how to put bulldozers out of operation as well as how to avoid getting caught afterwards "inspire[d] others to carry out activities straight from the pages" (Foreman 1991, 18). The novel's cunning motto at the copyright page points out that "This book, though fictional in form, is based strictly on historical fact. Everything in it is real and actually happened. And it all began one year from today." This invitation has been taken at face value by many who, book in hand, have gone out into the desert to wreck a bulldozer. Nash, too, verifies that "*The Monkey Wrench Gang* became their [other monkeywrenchers] blueprint for action" (1989, 191). Abbey, however, pointed out that the novel is "a work of fiction," and that it "would be naïve to read it as a tract, a program for action, or a manifesto. The book is a comedy, with a happy ending" (Abbey 1993, 252). Even so, in the period after the publication of the novel, there were

more people across the country engaged in secret midnight "field-studies" of bulldozers, pulling up survey stakes, burning billboards, and spiking trees.

Abbey can, nevertheless, be said to be one of the foremost literary advocates of wilderness preservation starting with his honored non-fiction *Desert Solitaire* from 1968. *Desert Solitaire* calls for a discussion of environmental awareness, and suggests notions where necessary social procedures are needed in order to keep the wilderness areas restored. Seven years later, with the publication of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Abbey experienced that the deterioration he had warned about in his non-fiction now had taken place. In this novel, the four self-appointed wilderness defenders take the matter in their own hands. As enthusiastic Hayduke states, "Seldom, there's work to do.... It's our duty" (126). Although they are not always sure how to do the "night-work" right, they agree to "...work it all out as [they] go along" (58). Even Abbey was engaged in "research." Writing about and believing in eco-defense and monkeywrenching, Abbey wanted and needed to know how things worked. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* there is a scene where Hayduke is taken by surprise while he is busy draining the oil from a bulldozer. The one who surprises him is Jack Burns who says:

"Now what the hell are you a-lookin' for under the crankcase guard of a goldang bulldozer after dark?"

Hayduke thought carefully. It was a good question. "Well," he said, and hesitated.

"You think it over now. Take your time."

"Well..."

"This oughta be pretty good."

"Yeah. Well, I was looking for - well, I'm writing a book about bulldozers and I thought I ought to see what they look like. Underneath."

"That ain't very good. How do they look?"

"Greasy." (198)

We can only wonder whether Abbey has written this scene based on personal experience or whether it is just made up. In Temple's video, answering whether

the novel was based on experienced “night-studies,” Abbey’s close friend Jack Loeffler, laughing, aptly comments that “at least the train didn’t happen” (Temple 1993, 30min.). In several places, Abbey takes part in the story himself, using his sense of humor to tell the important message. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* a park ranger named Edwin P. Abbott, Jr.⁶ contacts Doc and Bonnie to ask a few questions. “He looked as a park ranger should look, tall, slim, able, not too bright” Abbey writes ironically (170). To the ranger’s surprise he finds no trace of ecotage equipment, but finds Bonnie’s “personally autographed extremely valuable first-edition copy of *Desert Solipsism*” (177). Abbey refers to his non-fiction *Desert Solitaire*, which he initially wanted to call *Desert Solecism*. Towards the end of the novel, it is ranger Abbott who arrests Seldom believing it is Hayduke. We also read about a helicopter pilot who had a “big mustache drooping” and “probably had a mother and a little sister back in Homer City, Pennsylvania” (220). It is clear that Abbey is writing in reference to himself when we know that he was raised in rural Home, Pennsylvania, where parts of his family still live. In *Hayduke Lives!*, too, there are several references to the author. One of the more noteworthy scenes is the one where an old journalist is watching the Earth First! rallies. At the meeting there are:

no one reportorial but that seedy old buzzard from nowhere who calls himself a “literary journalist” and sometimes appeared at events like this, listening carefully, nodding, smiling, deaf as a stump, taking notes, getting his facts wrong but interviewing the prettier women at exhaustive length, exploiting public bravery for private profit and calling it . . . calling it what? He called it Art. Nobody knew his name, but his *T-shirt* read “Readin’ Rots the Mind.” (Abbey 1990c, 82)

As this passage shows, Abbey hints at the lack of involvement among fellow writers to cover environmental “events like this.” In addition, he makes fun of the reader with the slogan on the T-shirt in the last sentence.

⁶ Edward Abbey’s middle name was Paul, which also was his father’s name.

Hayduke Lives!:

Summing up Themes and Opening towards the Future

The desert tortoise resurrects himself. Covered with
dust but unbroken, uncrushed - uncrushable!
- he clambers out, crawls forward, extends his four legs
fully from his plated shell and stands erect.
-*Hayduke Lives!*

As the title of the novel indicates, *Hayduke Lives!* continues the story of Hayduke and his friends Doc, Bonnie, and Seldom. While *The Monkey Wrench Gang* opens with a bird's view of the Southwest, *Hayduke Lives!* starts off with an earth's view scene where an old desert turtle is buried alive under the weight of a "huge and yellow, blunt-nosed glass-eyed grill-faced" bulldozer (Abbey 1990, 5). Throughout the novel, which is set three years after the end of its predecessor, "The Machine" is a constant threat, coming closer and closer in time and space. Still on probation, having settled into a family of their own, Doc and Bonnie are married and expecting their second child. Seldom Seen who has been sued for divorce by his two first wives following the court trials, now lives with his third wife and works as a combined watermelon farmer and river guide. Hayduke, on the other hand, lives all by himself in a hidden canyon cave. Having become much more advanced in his ecotage, Hayduke carries a number of different I.D. badges which enables him to get access to restricted areas. His ultimate dream is to blow up Glen Canyon Dam, but while waiting for the right moment, Hayduke is busy with other monkey wrench activities, assisted by the immortal Jack Burns.

The novel also introduces us to a number of contemporary spokesmen of wilderness preservation. Some of them include Bernie Mushkin (vaguely disguised as eco-philosopher Murray Bookschin), Arne Naess who coined the term "Deep Ecology," poet Gary Snyder, Earth First! and its co-founder Dave Foreman, and Paul Watson of the Sea Shepherd Society, the radical

environmental "navy." In addition, other prominent characters who enter the stage are Oral Hatch and Erika. He is a young Mormon missionary who has just returned to Utah from "the slender pendant barely tumescent damned Gentile nation of Norway" (49). Appointed as a probation officer by the FBI, Oral's duty is to spy on the Monkey Wrench Gang and to reveal information about the wanted Hayduke. Erika, the young Scandinavian woman who becomes a spokeswoman for Earth First!, and an earth-goddess in the novel, has come to the U.S. to find her sweetheart Oral. She is on the barricades encouraging the seemingly inexperienced environmentalists in a joint action against the Super Giant Earth Mover. Her open and direct arguments attracts more environmentalist to the rallies. "'Chentlemen,' said the tall woman... 'in Norge vee luff your Grand Canyon off Arida zona. Vee neffer *dream* you tink to dig it up for making thermonuclear bombshells'" (83).⁷ The main physical enemy of the novel is the twenty-seven million pound and seven story tall Mitsubishi Giant Earth Mover, called GOLIATH. In the novel Hayduke manages to persuade the old Gang to reunite for a last crusade against "the 4200-W Walking Dragline earth-moving machine. Him. Her. It. The Thing.... Tyrannosaurus" (243). During the confrontation with the GOLIATH, the Earth First!ers prove their inability to act when they are put under pressure. The Monkey Wrench Gang, however, with the help of old Jack Burns, manages to hijack the GOLIATH, but kills a man in the struggle for escape after its destruction. The team escapes, Oral Hatch and Erika leave for Norway, the investigators from the FBI kill each other in a shoot-out trying to arrest Hayduke as he escapes to Australia with the Sea Shepherd. The open ending suggests that the Gang's ecotage activity has been successful, as well as is opens for the possibility of future eco-raids.

The story in *Hayduke Lives!* does move at a very fast pace towards the end, which indicates that Edward Abbey was in a hurry writing the novel. In his

⁷ Erika is several times throughout the novel mentioned as being both Swedish and Norwegian. Her accent is, however, strongly influenced by what is most likely to be German.

journal he writes:

Two more weeks will finish the job. I may skip the courtroom trial, however, just in case my guts don't hold out much longer. Let Doc, Bonnie and Seldom escape free and clear from the hijacking of the GEM, get undetected, unidentified, and therefore never arrested or indicted. This way we'd still have a complete novel, satisfy the contract, and I can croak, if necessary in peace. (1994, 352)

The quote, written only six weeks before his death at the age of 62, illustrates how he wished to complete his book before he passed away. Although several changes and deletions were made at the end, he managed to finish the novel which was published posthumously in 1990.

Reviewers have frequently pointed out that *Hayduke Lives!*, as Publishers Weekly sums up, "seems a little sour and tired" and that "the characters are a yard high, and the dialogue that sort that appears in bubbles over people's heads" ("*Hayduke Lives!*" 1989, 42). Even so, I will argue that *Hayduke Lives!* is at least as rich in action and anarchism, energy and environmentalism as its predecessor. The fact that Abbey knew he was dying when he wrote the novel can indicate that *Hayduke Lives!* is a more "honest" novel than the previous novels may have been. First, Edward Abbey did not have to worry about critical reviewers, knowing he was probably not going to outlive its publication, although, as he states, he had obligations towards the publisher. Second, Abbey knew that this was his last chance to speak of his overriding environmental conviction, and therefore he had nothing to lose.

What many reviewers seem to fail to understand is that *Hayduke Lives!* is not simply a rewriting of plot and character behavior from *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. Because, while *The Monkey Wrench Gang* tells the story of how a single group assaults the modern industrial age, *Hayduke Lives!* goes a step further. Even though it has countless references as to how and why one should fight the Machine and and by what means, the novel also focuses on fundamental issues concerning the development of the present environmental movements.

Subscribing to the Earth First! ideology and their slogan "No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth" (Abbey 1990c, 81), and reading the novel from an urging perspective, *Hayduke Lives!* can be understood to justify and encourage sabotage as an ethically alternative in fighting the Machines. In addition it argues that stronger means than cowardly behavior and passive approaches such as civil disobedience, are necessary in order to stop "progress" and its destruction of the West. In this respect, *Hayduke Lives!* is written, politically speaking, about justifying sabotage as a necessary option. In all the three novels there are some people, such as Jack Burns and George W. Hayduke, who never give up fighting the Machine. Also, there are some who fight for a while but "surrenders" when the going gets tough, such as Paul Bondi in *The Brave Cowboy*, Doc, Bonnie and Seldom in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, and the Earth Firsters in *Hayduke Lives!*.

Hayduke Lives! also illustrates the change in popularity of professions in the early 1980s. During the hearing in one of the early chapters, people within the idealistic fields of sociology, nursing, teaching, and conservation, are booed on by employers from potential fields within business, engineering, and machine development. At the same time these latter groups and U.S. authorities are criticized for letting foreign corporations "dig out the uranium, process it here in our own backyard, haul away a few thousand pounds of concentrate and leave us with a million tons of radioactive waste" (19). In this sense, *Hayduke Lives!* discuss the collision of values. And throughout the novel opposing values are presented, such as humans vs. nature, progress vs. conservation, Christianity vs. paganism, regulations vs. freedom, and passivity vs. action. There should be no doubt which values are favored by the novel. In case of doubt, the opening epigram is meant to state its seriousness. It warns that "[a]nyone who takes this book seriously will be shot," and that those who do "not take it seriously will be buried alive by a Mitsubishi bulldozer."

In *The Brave Cowboy*, the frequent truck scenes symbolize the advancing

Machine. Their interruptions of the main story create a sense of "drive" to the story, but also remind the reader of the Machine's presence and advancement. This symbolism continues in *Hayduke Lives!* where our apprehension is confirmed as: "...day by day the machine advanced" (Abbey 1990c, 133). Here the same literary technique is used, but this time the interruptions instead illustrate resistance. In the novel slogans are used as an attempt to slow down The Machine, as the following passage illustrates:

NATURE: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT ALONE.... The largest mobile land machine on planet Earth was stomping forward, step by step.... The ground resonated. DEFEND YOUR MOTHER. God, the reporter whispered to himself, as the flat yellow bulk of the G:E:M.'s engine room began to rise over the skyline.... RESIST MUCH, OBEY LITTLE.... Pinyon jays, brown towhees, a mountain bluebird and a sparrow hawk flew before the oncoming machines. (244-245)

The slogans appear frequently, but unexpectedly, as GOLIATH approaches. They are also capitalized, and in the imperative, which give them more emphasis. On a larger scale, the chapters "The Cleaning lady," "The Night Watchman," "Dr. Weiner," and "The Baron's Attack," also appear irregularly and without warning. Their interruptions illustrate how the novel, in its construction, tries to emphasize the importance of resistance by repeatedly giving examples of ecotage activity.

Reading the three novels, one realizes that they are quite similar. All of them are set in the Southwest, they have more or less the same characters, and describe a dramatic confrontation between industrial development and individuals. As Edward S. Twinning observes, the repeated themes and ideas make each novel "a ritual reenactment of symbolic drama" where Abbey states his sacred philosophy (Twinning 1978, 7). It can, without doubt, be said that the prose in the novels express what can be understood as environmental propaganda, since it obviously is "designed to do 'a little more' than just entertain" as Ronald so appropriately formulates it (Ronald 1988, 198). Having

convincing arguments and ideas repeated throughout, the novels force the reader to consider his/her view of each matter. Headings such as "The American Logging Industry: Plans and Problems," indicate that there *are* problems linked with this industry, while the imperative "Behold Goliath!" appeals to the reader to take action. In addition, both *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* contain detailed descriptions of, for example, how to destroy a bulldozer. In the following passage Seldom gives Hayduke, and the reader, a "lesson in equipment operation."

"This," he said, "is the flywheel clutch lever. Disengage." He pushed it forward. "This here is the speed selector lever. Put in neutral."

Hayduke watched closely, memorizing each detail. "That's the throttle," he said.

"That's right. This is the forward and reverse lever. It should be in neutral too. This is the governor control lever. Push forward all the way....

"So everything's in neutral and the brake is locked and it can't go anywhere?"

"That's right.... Now we select our operating speed. We have five speeds forward, four in reverse. Since you're kind of a beginner and that cliff is only a hundred yards away we'll stick to the slowest speed for right now." (Abbey 1992b, 102-103)

Above, Hayduke and the reader are taught, by Seldom and the author, how to start a bulldozer. Seldom(/Abbey) takes one step at a time in case the reader, too, is a "kind of a beginner." And in order to make sure the reader gets every detail, Hayduke repeats all the procedures. The description is so detailed in itself that we do not need any illustrations to explain how they do it. The passage is one of numerous examples of how the novels invite the reader to take part in the monkey wrench business. We can do it indirectly by reading the book, or choose to do it directly by using the novels as a manual for ecotage activities.

All three novels have a similar structure holding the stories and themes together. *The Brave Cowboy* opens with a ballad that tells the story of a brave cowboy who ends his life trying to get away from a herd of five thousand longhorns. At first the sentimental song does not seem to have anything to do

with the story in the novel. However, when we get to the last pages we realize that the ballad actually foresees the end of the tale. Three of the stanzas are as follows:

He scrambled around and looked for the fray;
saw 10,000 red eyes coming his way,
saw 20,000 hooves coming for pay.

They tried to get clear but it was too late,
they were surrounded by bellowing hate
and the panicked horse completed their fate.

The scream of the horse was an awful sound
when the crazy herd rode them all down
and kicked and rolled them over the ground. (xv-xvii)

Having read the last five pages, we see that the "eyes" and "hooves" that are "coming his way," are metaphors for the headlights and wheels of the approaching thundering traffic. The machines come for "pay" in revenge for the cowboy's escape and his constant subversions. The "bellowing hate" becomes the engine's roar, while the accident is anticipated as "the herd rode them all down," in the last stanza above.

The Monkey Wrench Gang does not open with a ballad, but the frame is seen in its table of contents. The prologue is called "The Aftermath," while the epilogue is called "The New Beginning." We would normally expect the "beginning" in the prologue, and the "aftermath" in the epilogue, but Abbey plays with the terms "pro-," "after," and "epi-," "begin." This creates a notion of timelessness, as Ann Ronald points out, where there is really no beginning or end (Ronald 1988, 204). This suggests that the themes in the novel do not belong to any specific period of time, but that its ideas are of eternal importance. In addition the title of the epilogue opens for something to come, for example, the continued story of Hayduke and his friends.

A similar presentation is found in *Hayduke Lives!*. The novel opens with a chapter called "Burial," but ends with "Resurrection." This, together with the

novel's title, arouses associations of the phrase "Jesus Lives!." This is an example of how the novel, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, challenges the opposing values of Christianity and paganism. And in the novel, Hayduke, who represents pagan values, becomes the immortal Redeemer.

It was not Abbey's main intention to write novels that would place him together with Faulkner, Joyce, or Hemingway, although the desire for fame was one of his motives for writing. "There are two kinds of art" says Abbey, "(1) decorative, nonobjective, wallpaper art; and (2) art with a moral purpose" (Abbey 1990b, 65). To some, the style and content in Abbey's fiction can hardly be called profound. However, it is obvious that *The Brave Cowboy*, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, and *Hayduke Lives!* all carry within them a deeper message. As Ness formulates it, these books should be read for their "ethos rather than held accountable to the prevailing literary fashions" (Ness 1990, 459).

CHAPTER THREE

Nature and the Machine

The Wilderness

The river, the canyon, the desert world was always changing, from moment to moment, from miracle to miracle, within the firm reality of mother earth. River, rock, sun, blood, hunger, wings, joy - this is the real, Smith would have said, if he'd wanted to.

-The Monkey Wrench Gang

There have been many concepts of the American West and its deserts throughout history. Adventurous stories of cowboys and Western heroism drew attention to this wild country. A desert myth developed from biblical images of a God-forsaken area free from all the beauty and harmony associated with paradisiac gardens. At the same time, the desert functioned as "the garden in the desert," a place for meditation and contemplation where "all the Hebrew prophets went to regenerate their visions" (Abbey 1990c, 167). In its rich variety, Western fiction, history, and nature writing has increased the "value" of the desert landscape over the years, making it become an area of adventure and opportunity. This is seen in the current American appeal of the Southwest which is a continuation of the nineteenth-century myth of the West as an area of possibilities and untamed frontiers.

Even though Abbey despised definitions, he was labeled the "Thoreau of the American West" by Larry McMurtry and has often been named a nature writer together with authors such as Gary Snyder, Annie Dillard, Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch⁸, and Henry David Thoreau. However, Abbey stated that "I

⁸ In his book *Nature's Kindred Spirits*, James McClintock points out the connections between these writers and shows how they express their views on nature (1994. *Nature's Kindred Spirits*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press). References to books mentioned in the footnotes are not listed in the bibliography unless they are cited in the chapters. However, a bibliographic reference will be noted in the footnote.

am not a naturalist. I never was and never will be a naturalist. I'm not even sure what a naturalist is except that I'm not one. I'm not even an amateur naturalist" (1991, xi). In spite of Abbey's statement, there is no doubt that Abbey spoke on behalf of nature. "I'm beginning to feel a deep revulsion against the whole goddamn human race, excepting a few friends and loved ones. Only Nature engages my full sympathy anymore," he wrote in his journal (1994, 271). His biocentric statements and "nature praising" essays have been used to label him an "amiable misanthrope" (Manes 1990, 4).

Abbey never studied botany or zoology, but he knew much about the birds, plants, animals, and land formations of the Southwest. His book *Cactus Country*, illustrated with color photographs, describes the natural habitat of the plants and animals in this arid region. However, his books are not meant to be books in natural science, but are written to:

evoke... the way things *feel* on stormy desert afternoons, the exact shade of color in shadows on the warm rock, the brightness of October, the rust and silence and echoes of human history along dusty desert roads, the fragrance of burning mesquite, and a few other simple, ordinary, inexplicable things like that. (Abbey 1989, 21)

Trying to influence us, the texts express nature's importance, and how it can make us *feel*, rather than how it actually functions as a biological environment.

Jane Tompkins, in her study of the "Inner Life of Westerns," sees the Western landscape as a place of infinite possibilities (1992, 75). She notes that not only do the Western writers elaborate on the infinite changes of light, color and smell of the landscape, but they also use "the rhythms of the landscape's appearance and disappearance in... the way it impinges on his [the hero's] mind, body, and emotions..." (78). This is evident in the following passage from Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*:

Most of the day he was able to walk on bare rock, on the smooth, slightly rolling surface of a stratum of sedimentary sandstone.... it felt good to be marching again; the hot dry clean air smelled good to him, he liked the picture of far-off mesas shimmering under heat waves, the glare of sunlight on red stone, the murmur of stillness in his ears. (84)

In the passage, several types of figurative language are used to describe the desert, and Hayduke's experience of the mesas. There is a combined use of onomatopoeia (echoism), in "smooth," "rolling," and "murmur," as well as the alliteration in several sibilant words. These stylistic effects reinforce the picture of Hayduke's surroundings. The landscape is described with long alliterative words, which indicates the vastness of the old desert landscape. In addition, the "murmur of stillness," a paradox in itself, suggests that Hayduke is far out in the open country. The air, however, is described with the use of short adjectives, such as "hot," "dry," and "clean," which confirms its light qualities.

A distinguished feature of western literature is that the landscape has a character of its own. Being of equal importance with the human characters, the landscape thus interacts on and together with all other characters in the novels. Abbey believed that "the land acts upon and shapes human beings everywhere, Eastern as well as Western, city as well as country" (Solheim 1989, 92). And in the three novels, the country landscape plays a much more soothing role than what the city landscape is able to represent. The novels paint a very black and white picture of nature and the Machines, where nature is good and Machines are bad. As this chapter will show, the elements of nature are described with emotive words in order to appeal to the reader's feelings and understanding of nature's importance. The Machines, on the other hand, are portrayed as fearful, polluted, insensible, and advancing day by day like a "mad electrical pandemonium" (Abbey 1990c, 244). The objective of these fixed portrayals is, however, to convince the reader of the accuracy of its descriptions. Consequently they are meant to make the reader support the radical

monkeywrenchers, and their cause, and hate the Machines.

A sentiment in the three novels is that wilderness is “a necessity of the human spirit, and as vital to our lives as water and good bread” (Abbey 1990a, 169). The Biblical image of paradise as a “garden of bliss and changeless perfection where the lions lie down like lambs,” is ridiculed since it is without foundation in reality (167). The “new” paradise, however, consists of the “actual, tangible, dogmatically real earth on which we stand” with its “scorpions,” “rattlesnakes,” “earthquakes,” “sandstorms,” “cactus,” and “mesquite” (167).

In *The Brave Cowboy*, the wilderness functions as a complement and mirrors the world of Jack Burns. Through Burns we learn how strong and important the bond is between wilderness and man. He has become attached to nature by learning to “read” and respect its laws. While imprisoned, he felt like a “derelict stumbling through a mechanical world he could not understand” (Abbey 1992a, 206). After his escape to the mountains around Duke City, his instincts and senses are regained, and his mentality restored. Now “Burns felt eager, hungry, intensely aware of every shade, sound, smell and movement in *his* environment.... For the first time in nearly two days and nights he felt himself to be a whole and living creature” (206. My emphasis). Burns’ personality changes once he is back in “his environment.” He feels relieved being free again, and the fact that he is “eager,” “hungry,” and “aware,” indicates that his spark of life is rekindled.

Burns’ pleasant experience in the desert changes dramatically once he is aware that he is being tracked down by the authorities. At the opening of the novel, Burns is unwinding in an area with rolling mesas, arroyos and tumbleweed. The landscape is pictured as open, friendly, and familiar to him. However, being pursued, Burns’ suffocating experience in the jail cell follows him to the mountains. There it, as Ann Ronald mentions, “recur[s] later to diminish [Burns’] relative freedom” (1988, 21). When Burns flees from the dusty bars and dirty walls of the prison cell into the New Mexican desert, it is only to

find similar barriers in the wilderness. The first chapter of his escape begins:

The great cliffs leaned up against the flowing sky, falling through space as the earth revolved.... But the light had no power to soften the ragged edges and rough-spelled planes of the granite; in that clear air each angle and crack cast a shadow as harsh, clean, sharp, real, as the rock itself... the cliffs held the illusion of a terrible violence suddenly arrested, paralyzed in time, latent with power. (Abbey 1992a, 200)

In this passage the slickrock resembles the slick walls from the prison cell. The high granite walls cause a sense of illusion as they are "falling through space," making Burns dizzy and insecure. The sunlight, which also was blocked from his cell, has "no power" to light up the new barrier.

The open wilderness, as it is portrayed in the three novels, invites a life in freedom and peace from the constructs of culture. It is important to be able to perceive the wilderness without the screen of human culture. This means that we have to free ourselves of cultural and human restraints in order to understand and fully appreciate its value. According to Hayduke's dream, the only way to accomplish this is through "a counter-industrial revolution" which will strengthen the untamed world of the wilderness (Abbey 1992b, 190). There, in contemplation, freedom will be found.

The notion of wilderness as a quiet and sacred place is described in *The Brave Cowboy* where Sheriff Johnson, on the hunt for Jack Burns, enters a narrow canyon. He felt like an intruder, "...as conspicuous and self-conscious as a tourist tramping into a silent cathedral" (Abbey 1992a, 232). In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Doc Sarvis sees the need for the wilderness as a mental sanctuary:

"The wilderness once offered men a plausible way of life," the doctor said. "Now it functions as a psychiatric refuge. Soon there will be no wilderness." He sipped his bourbon and ice. "Soon there will be no place to go. Then the madness becomes universal." Another thought. "And the universe goes mad."(53)

Sarvis pinpoints today's situation of the rapid decrease in wilderness areas, warning us of what may come if development and progress continue at the same pace. One of the major themes in the novels is that maintaining the wilderness areas is vital for human existence, because undermining these sanctuaries will lead to the final decay of man. The demands of rapid development from our society lead to stress factors that eliminate the possibilities of restoring oneself. Therefore, it is only possible to maintain a stable and serene human environment by preserving and restoring wilderness areas and putting an end to "progress."

In addition to its importance as a restorer, the wilderness is emphasized as a place of undiscovered beauty. Standing on a mighty mesa, rangerette Virginia Dick in *Hayduke Lives!* experiences the landscape in wonder, "...she was coming around, more and more and day by day, to love this queer barren God-forsaken land. There was something here, something in the space and silence, something in the landforms and the cloud formations" (Abbey 1990c, 136). Although everybody has some kind of experience, or notion of the wilderness, for some, as the quote suggests, learning to appreciate it can take some time. In the novel, however, the detailed descriptions of the landscape enables the reader to discover and visualize its beauty the way the author intended. And in the novels, as in real life, the remoteness of the desert attracts us in our search for the intimate and the inexplicable.

The Juniper

...a degenerate juniper tree, shriveled and twisted,
cringing over its bed of lava rock and sand.
An unprivileged juniper tree, living not on water
and soil but on memory and hope.
-*The Brave Cowboy*

In *Hayduke Lives!*, the juniper is referred to as "a massive matriarch... thick as an elephant's hind leg and tall as a giraffe, a shaggy splendor of a tree about nine hundred to a thousand years old" (240). With its grandness, it functions as a reminder of the freedom of the individual. The quote next to the heading, is from the opening chapter of *The Brave Cowboy* (3). It not only describes the juniper, but it also refers to Jack Burns, who is a symbol of individualism. Almost dying, the juniper illustrates the state of individualism in today's industrial world. However, in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the splendid juniper undergoes destruction as it is confronted by the destructive, violent and ruthless attacks of the bulldozers. Note, for example, the merciless tone of the following passage:

...the little pinyon pines and junipers offered no resistance to the bulldozers. The crawler-tractors pushed them all over with nonchalant ease and shoved them aside, smashed and bleeding, into heaps of brush, where they would be left to die and decompose. No one knows precisely how sentient is a pinyon pine, for example, or to what degree such woody organisms can feel pain or fear... a living tree, once uprooted, takes many days to wholly die. (65-66)

In this dramatic passage, bulldozers are busy tearing up the junipers by the roots. The emotional description causes the reader to sympathize with the desecrated trees. The figurative language of personification is used to emphasize the charging machines as opposed to the vulnerable trees. In the passage, there is a distinction between the "little pinyon pines" and the "crawler-tractors." The sound-symbolism here illustrates their significance. The two "pin"'s stress "little," while "crawler-tractors" involves more articulation, and

therefore emphasizes the roaring machine. In addition, "pushed" and "shoved," are use to describe the "nonchalant ease" of the bulldozers, another negative quality. The pines and junipers, on the other hand, are wasted, a tendency which can be said to be characteristic of the modern consumer society. Lying there, the trees are given the abilities to bleed, feel, and sense the world around them. By touching upon the sensibility of the "friendly trees", the text gives the reader a different perspective, as few tend to think that trees are capable of feeling (Abbey 1992b, 202). However, using nature's point of view is rather common among preservationist in various environmental debates. Such a line of argument is not far from what we hear from animal rights movements in their discussion of, for example, whaling or seal hunting. Some radical environmentalists even equate construction work with terrorism, as both involve destructing life, which will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

In the three novels, the monkeywrenchers use the juniper as firewood as well as a shelter. And like the monkeywrenchers, its most important quality is its ability to survive in rough and dry areas. "The juniper is a hard, tough, dense, slow-growing and fine-textured plant, all-enduring and perdurable," we read in *Hayduke Lives!* (240). In the same novel there are several passages where the juniper shows its toughness. Note, for example, the desperate tone in the following sentence from the same book: "The lonesome juniper, nine-tenths dead, thrust its bare burnished gray claw toward the blue [sky]" (25). The juniper reminds us of a man in desperation, driving his hand in a cry towards a God above. A similar reference is found at the end of the last chapter called "Resurrection" where a juniper "lifts a twisted silvergray limb toward the sky - a gesture of static assertion, the affirmation of an embattled but undefeated existence" (307). Like a Statue of Liberty, the juniper tree declares a righteous victory over bulldozers and chain-saws. In addition, the gesture may symbolize Abbey's triumph in finishing *Hayduke Lives!* before he died, and the novel's infinite possibilities of success.

The Vulture

Rocking gently on his coal-black wings, he watches a
metallic dragonfly tracking methodically back and forth
above the Fins, above the Standing Rocks,
making a violent unfitting noise.
- *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

"Vulture," a poem by Robinson Jeffers from 1954, presents a point of view which is similar to what is often used in Abbey's novels. In Jeffers' poem, the reader is presented with the vulture's point of view, as the narrator realizes he is becoming the bird's next meal. Having a perception of the vulture as a solitary and foul black scavenger, constantly seeking prey, it is interesting to see how the bird is used in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*. The human qualities that are ascribed to the vulture in the novels emphasize its importance as a symbol of thought, freedom, and anarchism.

The novels have several passages with the narration in the vulture's point of view. These passages, where the soaring bird describes life far below, make us see the world from a different perspective. Note how the following passage ridicules human activity, and how their stressful manners are contrasted with the calm conduct of the bird.

Meanwhile, up in the sky, the lone visible vulture spirals in lazy circles higher and higher, contemplating the peaceful scene below.... He sees downstream from the dam the living river and above it the blue impoundment, that placid reservoir where, like waterbugs, the cabin cruisers play. He sees, at this very moment, a pair of water skiers with tangled towlines about to drown beneath the waters. He sees the glint of metal and glass on the asphalt trail where endless jammed files of steaming automobiles creep home to Kanab, Page, Tuba City, Panguitch and points beyond. (Abbey 1992b, 6)

In this passage, the narrator invites us to look down at ourselves, through the eyes of the soaring bird, in the same way we would look down on busy working ants crawling on the forest floor. Floating on the thermal winds, "in lazy circles,"

the vulture has plenty of time, and its serene behavior is in contrast to the atmosphere far below. The description of a “peaceful scene” is, however, very ironic. What we see, is actually a clumsy picture of boats racing around, causing an accident on the “blue impoundment,” and a “endless” row of “steaming” cars bumper to bumper on their way home. It is interesting to note the emotive choice of words. The river below the dam is “living,” while above, the water has become a “placid reservoir” trapped in an “impoundment,” emphasizing that it has been deprived from its natural flow. In the vulture’s point of view, humans are nothing but “buglike micro-busybodies” crawling and swarming across the land (Abbey 1992b, 313). With his sharpened senses, the vulture hears voices far below:

George, says one tiny voice, incredibly remote but clear, goldangit George you know I didn't think you could do it, when it come right down to the nubbin of it.... Why Seldom Seen you buzzard-beaked Mormon motherfucker I can do anything I want to if I want to do it and what's more I will and what's more they're never I mean never I mean never absolutely NEVER gonna catch me.... The micro-voices fade but not completely: the gibberish and laughter go on and on and on, for miles. . . . The vulture smiles his crooked smile. (313-4)

Still floating high above, the bird responds to what he observes with a “crooked smile.” He responds with indulgence, but the way he smiles indicates that he might also know what will happen to the the tiny creatures.

Through the vulture’s point of view, we see how silly and preposterous human behavior can be. The occasional use of a birds-eye perspective in the text, make us think about our own way of life and what we do with it. Consequently it makes us wonder whether man has a more necessary function in today’s world than other beings. One of the few characters in the novels who is able to see things from several perspectives at the same time is Hayduke. “Well, it all depends on your point of view,” says Hayduke marching in the rain. “If you look at it from the buzzard’s point of view the rain is a drag. No visibility,

no lunch. But from my point of view, from the guerrilla's point of view -" (Abbey 1992b, 327). Being able to see the world from different angles is an advantage that, in this case, Hayduke benefits from in his combat.

The bird represents the concepts of "silence" and "contemplation" as it is seen watching "from overhead, circling and soaring, dreaming and waiting, all the time in the world" (Abbey 1990c, 237). Its tranquil behavior is compared to our strenuous and hasty way of living. However, the vulture with its black wings, red neck-feathers, and constantly on the lookout, becomes an appropriate symbol of anarchism in the novels. It resembles the "flag of anarchy, red monkey wrench on a field of black," as it moves in the air (Abbey 1990c, 199). In addition, being free as bird, it represents the quest for freedom which is sought by anarchists. The use of the red and black colors, really is a recurrent feature to illustrate the spirit of anarchism in the novels. Jack Burns, the anarchist himself, also wears a black bandanna, reminiscent of a ring of black feathers, around his neck.

Water and Rivers

He knelt at the spring. Water dripped from the ceiling and walls of the cave, which were streaked with alkali and other salts, but the water was sweet enough to be potable.
-Hayduke Lives!

Water is an important symbol in Abbey's novels. Its quality of metamorphosis enables it to adjust to the environment. This transforming ability gives water its strongest character, namely that it is difficult to control and handle, and once stopped, it will always seek another way out. In *The Brave Cowboy*, water is

used to illustrate the spirit of resistance against the establishment. Anarchist Jack Burns, in convincing Jerry of his invulnerability, expresses this notion in *The Brave Cowboy* when he says: "Nothing can hurt me; I'm like water: boil me away and I come back in the next thunderhead" (Abbey 1992a, 26-7). As the pressure in a boiling pot increases when the lid is on, the quote suggests that any authoritarian suppression will only make people's resistance more tenacious.

The following sentence from *Hayduke Lives!*, expresses how water, or the spirit of resistance, has power. "A little stream of murky water, dammed here and there by ruts of mud, zigzags this way and that, seeking and eventually finding the way to lower ground" (Abbey 1990c, 306. My emphasis.). In the quote, the stream is given the ability to "estimate" in order to "seek," and find, a way out. However, a massive dam can block the free flow of water as authoritarian rules and regulation can limit the freedom of the individual. The construction of Glen Canyon Dam in the early 60s symbolized civilization's display of power towards people and nature, and subsequently the destruction of the west.⁹ A great many environmentalists and local organizations believed that depriving the Colorado River of its natural form was an absurd and totally unnecessary act. Once the dam was built, it caused an enormous uproar among environmentalists. Pointing to the immense concrete face of the dam, Hayduke says to Seldom, "If we could just get into the heart of that motherfucker. . ." (Abbey 1992b, 131). Seldom simply remarks that, "That dam don't have a heart" (131). There were several plans to eliminate the dam, but none of them were realized. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the Gang condemn the damming of the Colorado river

⁹ The construction of Glen Canyon Dam was a contentious issue for several environmental organizations. In the early 60s, several large environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club in particular, engaged in discussions with the Bureau of Reclamation which finally ended in a compromise. The result of the negotiations led to the cancellation of a plan damming Dinosaur National Monument for the construction of a dam in Glen Canyon. Some of the grass-root environmentalists could not reconcile themselves to the fact that the Sierra Club had not put up any fight during the negotiations. After the Glen Canyon Dam was completed, the Bureau of Reclamation celebrated by publishing a book called "Jewel of the Colorado" which commended the reservoir (Manes 1990, 4). National Geographic, being no better, published an article in their magazine with the gauche title: "Lake Powell, Waterway to Desert Wonders" (*National Geographic Magazine*, July 1967, p.44-75).

because it meant choking life. Hoping for a miracle that would destroy it, Seldom Smith's tries to remind God of the former beauty of the river, and prays for a "pre-cision-type earthquake" to crack the dam:

"Dear old God," he prayed, "you know and I know what it was like here, before them bastards from Washington moved in and ruined it all. You remember the river, how fat and golden it was in June, when the big runoff come down from the Rockies? Remember... the catfish so big and tasty and how they'd bite on spoiled salami? Remember that crick that come down through Bridge Canyon and Forbidden Canyon, how green and cool and clear it was?" (28)

Unfortunately, nothing happens, and the dam stands firmly. Above the concrete dam, the reservoir, named Lake Powell after the explorer and Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell, immediately attracted noisy powerboats and hollering water-skiers as portrayed earlier in this chapter. The consequences of the power-dam were immense for the surrounding areas. But most important, it led to severe side-effects downstream, as the 710-foot-high plug totally changed the character of the river. Standing on the middle of White Canyon bridge, Hayduke and Seldom notice that:

the river was no longer there. Somebody had removed the Colorado River.... Instead of a river he [Seldom] looked down on a motionless body of murky green effluent, dead, stagnant, dull, a scum of oil floating on the surface. On the canyon walls a coating of dried silt and mineral salts, like a bathtub ring, recorded high-water mark. (99)

What should have been a flowing river is instead a thick, lifeless and polluted mass of fluid. And the pronunciation of "a motionless body of murky green effluent," sounds as turbid as it is described. In order to help the reader visualize the whole destructive scene, we are presented with the familiar image of a bathtub ring, which instinctively brings forth a disgusting feeling to most of us.

The pools of water can also represent danger. Flowing water turns rough and rocky landscape to smooth slickrock. These streams of water eventually create

potholes of unknown depths. Bonnie Abzug experiences the feeling of being trapped in a ten-foot-deep waterpocket:

As she jumped she remembered something she was not supposed to forget: the rope. Too late. The waters, colder than she had expected, closed above her head. Her feet did not touch bottom.... Fighting off a wave of panic, she clutched at the sloping stone and tried to pull herself up. No go; she could find no purchase for hands or feet, finger or toes, on the smooth, if slightly gritty, sandstone. (Abbey 1990c, 158)

This scene shows that being in the wilderness, with its luring canyon cliffs or deep potholes has a certain risk. Underestimating the dangers of nature makes one liable to be a potential victim of it. It even shows how nutritious water may take lives if one behaves foolhardily, disrespectfully, or even makes a small mistake. Bonnie's dreadful experience may teach us to enter nature's premises on nature's terms.

The wilderness avengers, and Hayduke in particular, have come to be familiar with, and true experts, of the wilderness. Doc Sarvis, for instance, has reached a stage where he hears the call of the river when his toilet flushes. Bonnie, for example, knows that water which contains "mosquito larvae, a few of the strange little crustaceans called fairy shrimp, and the occasional spadefoot toad" is a sign of the water's purity and is refreshing to drink (Abbey 1992b, 155). In addition, when hiking in the arid landscape, they have learned to drink and fill up their canteens whenever they come across a pool of rainwater, never knowing when they will find the next puddle. Because they are frequently out-of-doors, they develop a rich vocabulary and terminology from their familiar area. What to many would seem as a small body of water, could, to them, be "seeps, *tinajas*, waterpockets, log troughs, bogholes, frog ponds, stocktanks, irrigation ditches, mining flumes hoofholes in a mudslide and such" (Abbey 1990c, 177). Bishop Love, however, represents those who care less about nature's state. Entering an untouched area with "a young cottonwood tree in leafy April green,

a plunge pool of clear water” (139), he simply utters that “water is water” (142). In his opinion its intrinsic value is unimportant unless it can be developed for some gain. This denotes everything from letting it be a setting for a romantic date, to harnessing water power. Bishop Love is no expert on water or springs. Even though he spends considerable time out in the arid landscape, he has not learned much about that environment. Sheriff Johnson from *The Brave Cowboy*, however, realizes that there is something in the beauty of the landscape. Walking towards some trees and a spring, Johnson feels as though the world stops. Seeing his reflection in the water calls upon memories and introspection. Note how the water invites silence and contemplation in the following extract:

The cicada went silent. He looked down at the little pool of water, the size of a bird bath, with its coronal of hovering gnats. He knelt down and put his face close to the water - a vague reflection of himself, dark and wavering, with the hollow eyesockets of statuary, came staring up to meet him; he looked through himself and saw the slight stirring of white sand on the bottom of the pool that revealed where the water welled up from below.... Johnson stirred the pool gently with his forefinger, dispersing the particles of dust and insects that floated on its surface, put his mouth to it and drank. (Abbey 1992a, 243)

As Johnson approaches the pool, the insect suddenly stops singing, as if taken by surprise. The man kneels for several minutes facing the pool of water, as if in prayer to “the spring and the blue-veined altar of rock behind it” (243). It is evident that this sacred moment by the water sends Johnson into a state of meditation. This is also underlined by the calm tone in the passage, effected in part by the long sentences. On his knees, he lets himself be lulled “to strange and archaic sensations; he remembered his childhood... and a dim sweet exquisite sorrow passed like a cloud over his mind” (243). The fact that he experiences an “exquisite sorrow” reveals his sensitivity, as well as indicating that the solemn atmosphere at the pool has had an impact on him. However, revealing himself and making himself vulnerable to such a degree, is not in keeping with his role as a tough sheriff. Aroused from his reverie, he is relieved

to see that “no one had seen him” (244).

What Seldom, Hayduke, and the other environmentalists dream of is the feeling of freedom and joy of life that free-flowing rivers and clear waters give them. A paradisiac situation is described in *Hayduke Lives!* where the young play and swim in a pool. Filling the pool is a waterfall, creating agitated, cooling water. Soft music from a Pan-like flutist, creates a romantic atmosphere accompanying the young in their play, “shy as unicorns in a field of maidens” (Abbey 1990c, 28). In the pool water nixies play. Seeing them there,

three young men plunged into the water. The girls shrieked in mock alarm, scattered out, backed off, then regrouped and dove like dolphins for the deep center of the pool, flashing glossy bottoms in the hot pulsing leer of the sun. (29)

However, a slight sign of the advancing machine shatters their paradisiac world, as a “trace of oil, appeared in the clear green of the waterfall,” like a snake intruding in the Garden of Eden (29).

The Machine

Something huge and yellow, blunt nosed glass-eyed grill-faced,
with a mandible of shining steel, belching black jolts of smoke
from a single nostril of seared metal, looms suddenly
gigantically behind the old desert turtle.
-Hayduke Lives!

The Southwest has, up until recently, represented the West and the frontier with its open wilderness areas. Except for Native American reservation areas, the Four Corners region has been relatively uninhabited. However, after World War II this region became a military area with nuclear testing, as well as a place for the mining and cattle industries which attracted a larger number of people. In

the 1960s national migration led to large planned-retirement communities. Ten years later, lavish resort complexes emerged with golf courses and other recreational facilities. Today, the Southwest is increasing its population, with people moving in from Mexico as well as from the West Coast, making the area a conglomeration of people and cultures. However, people who moved due to overpopulation and unemployment, have begun to face the same problems in the Southwest, and the cities are still expanding. This increasing expansion has caused great concern among environmentalists, who see the(ir) wilderness become more and more cramped as people start to move in. In the wake of the migrants an increasing number of industrial enterprises followed, which became their greatest concern. Because the increasing clusters of cities and industries, with owners always profit-conscious, led to the destruction of forests, mountains, canyons, and rivers, and threatened animal, human, and plant life. (Hopkins 1993)

The authorities, industrial corporations, cities, and various machines, are the main enemies in the novels. Their desecration of the Southwest, and its inhabitants is equated with bulldozers razing a landscape. In the novels, the machine becomes a symbol of the authorities and their domination. Consequently, in fighting the bulldozers, the Monkey Wrench Gang also fight the authorities.

To illustrate the tyrannical machines, the last two novels introduce an image of a dinosaur. The image is used in many raids where the Monkey Wrench Gang attack the machines, and even to describe a helicopter that "clatter[ed] like a pteranodon" (Abbey 1992b, 208). One of their countless raids start as the four monkeywrenchers, spying on a construction area, look down at "the iron dinosaurs" which "romped and roared in their pit of sand" (65). Peering down at the monsters, they do not feel sympathy as one might have felt looking at creatures on the brink of extinction. Rather, they feel considerably small and vulnerable with an "involuntary admiration for all that power, all that controlled

and directed superhuman force" (65). The need to overpower the creatures strengthens the group's bonds. Like brave knights, armed with tools, they approach the "green beasts of Bucyrus, the yellow brutes of Caterpillar, snorting like dragons, puffing black smoke into the yellow dust" (67). Their mission is to kill the dragons and thereby save the pure land. With the skills and precision of a surgeon, Hayduke and his three friends "worked on the patient, sifting handfuls of fine Triassic sand into the crankcase..." (75). Doomed to die, the machines are at the mercy of the knights who continue their deed by draining oil, letting the machine "bleed its lifeblood... with pulsing throbs onto the dust and sand" (76). The dinosaur image is emphasized with their animated, "clanking apparatus... tough red eyes... armored jaws," (227) and "a breeder reactor for a heart" (54). The battle, however, results in the crumpling of "steel flesh, iron bones" as the engines fight "for life" (202). By the time the battle is over, the eco-warriors have neutralized the beast which is "spattered with what looked, at first glance, like dried blood," until we learn it was "[r]ed mud, perhaps" (Abbey 1990c, 168). And as they leave their victim, the monkeywrenchers are impressed by their "murder of a machine" (Abbey 1992b, 71).

The machines' animated qualities open for an extensive use of metaphors in the novels. And using the dinosaur image makes the bulldozers as vulnerable as any other animal. 65 million years after dinosaurs became extinct, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* express the wish of an elimination of the dinosaurian machines. The following quotation from *Hayduke Lives!* illustrates the creature's unmistakable sign of weakness: "The trail... resembled that of a dying dinosaur, unable to lift its butt from the ground, dragging itself toward extinction with awkward but heroic effort" (249). The phrase: "doomed dinosaurs of iron," suggests that one day the machines will be defeated (Abbey 1992b, 78). And at the end of *Hayduke Lives!*, GOLIATH, the Giant Earth Mover, is forced over a canyon rim and falls, with its "spider eyes" still blinking, down to

the canyon floor (268). Its fall is illustrated in the following passage.

GOLIATH sank down and down into the deep time of geologic history - from Jurassic into late Triassic, from late Triassic into early Triassic, ricocheting off the Hoskinnini Tongue and the Cutler Formation, shattering itself finally upon the floor of Lost Eden Canyon, the unyielding monolithic fine-grained rock of the Cedar Mesa Sandstone deep in the Permian Age, 250 million years ago. (287)

The description of this immense fall is reminiscent of a scene in slow motion. It seems as though it will never reach the bottom. And to top it all, GOLIATH plunges into the abyss accompanied by the American "national anthem blaring out" from a tape-recorder in the wheel house (286). This detail suggests that a final downfall of the machines will end modern civilization. The passage takes us back through history to the Mesozoic era. With this fall, the ring is completed and the machine ends its days in the sandy canyon floor in the same place where dinosaur fossils have been found.

In *The Brave Cowboy*, the dinosaur image is absent. However, the fearsome machine is still present. This time it is represented by driver Hinton's large rumbling truck carrying technological fixtures into the Southwest. Together with the other "similar diesel monsters" in the novel, the truck represents all the qualities the driver opposes (Abbey 1992a, 41). Hinton wants "peace, order, and the reassurance of human voices" but finds it nowhere (41). And in the novel the machine, with its "forty tons of steel, iron, rubber, glass, oil, a cargo of metal," is contrasted with the "mere thing of flesh that drove and *was driven by* it" (136. My emphasis.). The disparity between them results in the powerful machine overrunning the weak, sick, and miserable trucker trying to steer it. And at the end, Hinton, aware of something, or somebody, in the middle of the road, "fought with the machine for a thousand feet before he could bring it to a full stop" (293). The thought of machines controlling humans, was not taken seriously by a great number of people in the 1950s. The novel expresses concepts "that were very unusual for that time," as author Charles Bowden says

in Eric Temple's documentary video of Edward Abbey (Temple 1993, 12 min.). But in Bowden's opinion, the criticism of the industrial and commercialized society "was not casual or flip, it was gut level" (12 min.).

In the two latter novels, the Machine is much more complex than in *The Brave Cowboy*. By now, the whole society has become more dependent on machines, and their technological potential. In these novels, people have reached a stage where their actions are colored by the vigilant presence of machines. As the authorities start monitoring everybody's move with the help of computer technology, the freedom of the individual is threatened. The Gang, for instance, are forced to pay in cash when they want to buy equipment, since credit cards would leave a "documented trail" of their activities (Abbey 1992b, 61). Unfortunately, there are only a few who realize that they are being run "not by a human... but by a machine driving a human" (Abbey 1990c, 91). This realization has various effects on people. Seldom is troubled by nightmares. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* he dreams he is being seized by a machine, personified as the Director of "The Dam," which wants to transform him into "ONE OF US"¹⁰ (213). Captured by a "superstructure... murmuring the basic message: Power . . . profit . . . prestige . . . pleasure . . . profit . . . prestige . . . pleasure . . . power..." Seldom is ready to be scanned (212).

Four green bulbs winked in the Director's frontal lobes. The voice changed again, becoming clipped and cryptic, clearly Oxfordian... The Director issued his orders to invisible assistants, who bustled about Smith's paralyzed body. **"GOOD. IMPRINT THE FLIP-FLOP CIRCUITS ON HIS SEMI-CIRCULAR CANAL BELOW THE EAR DRUM. RIGHT. FIVE THOUSAND VOLTS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT. ATTACH SENSOR WIRES BY STRONTIUM SUCTION CUP TO HIS COCCYX. FIRMLY. PLUG THE HIGH-VOLTAGE ADAPTER INTO THE FRONTAL SOCKETS OF HIS RECEPTOR NODE. THE HEAD, IDIOTS, THE HEAD! YES - RIGHT UP THE NOSTRILS. BE FIRM. PUSH HARD. QUITE SO. NOW CLOSE CIRCUIT BREAKERS. THANK YOU. . . . WELL NOW SMITH,"** The Director said, **"- OR SHOULD WE CALL YOU (HEH HEH) SELDOM SCANNED? - ARE YOU READY FOR OUR PROGRAM?"** (213)

Unable to free himself, Seldom fears the terror that is about to take place.

¹⁰ In the novel, the Director's dialogue is written in a font called "Machine," which I have tried to copy.

However, he wakes up just before the Doctor turns the switch that would brainwash him. The chapter warns, and dramatizes, how the authorities have the power and ability to make unsubmitting individuals obey their commands. To emphasize the technological and mechanical difference between the individual and the Machine, the Machine's dialogue is written in what used to be regular computer print, i.e. square letters. The Machine's lack of human warmth is expressed through the Director's harsh tone and scientific language.

The Machine, however, is more complex than what technical machines will ever be. Doc Sarvis fears authoritarian institutions joining forces and using machines as a medium for their greedy struggle for development. In his opinion, it will be like "a Martian invasion, the War of the Worlds," bringing with it chaos and destruction, and turning the nation into a police state where only corporate interests are important (142). He fears that the calm wilderness will be turned into a world where "men... armed with riot shotguns, tear gas, launchers, helmets and face shields, emerge[s] from the machines..." (Abbey, 1990c, 249). The consequence of the machine's "broad highway of progress, improvement and development," is the desecration of both land and people (25). Its rough trail shows "flat trademarks... overturned earth, broken and jumbled sandstone slabs, torn sagebrush, mutilated and slowly dying trees" which only result in the downfall of the area (25).

The Cities

A city man is home anywhere, for all big cities are much alike.
But a country man has a place where he belongs,
where he always returns, and where,
when the time comes, he is willing to die.
- *A Voice Crying in the Wilderness.*

In the three novels, the cities represent the Machine's "home," a cold place of sickness, corruption, and pollution which results in mental chaos. These urban jungles represent and accumulate all negative values as opposed to the wilderness areas described earlier in this chapter.

The Brave Cowboy expresses worry about the cities expanding into their surrounding areas. This apprehension is expressed through Jack Burns who, in the first chapter of the novel, makes his way to Duke City, the fictional name of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Burns' first encounter with civilization is the barbed-wire fence that runs in "an unbroken thin stiff line of geometric exactitude scored with bizarre, mechanical precision over the face of the rolling earth" (Abbey 1992a, 11). The barbed-wire with its cold and hard forms stands in contrast to the broken lava rock terrain of the "scattered patches of rabbitbrush and tumbleweed" of the wilderness (11). Burns is surprised to find nothing but rubbish, broken and defective objects while riding towards the outskirts of the city, as he would not waste things in such a manner. Mounted on his horse Whisky, he passes a "cardboard housetrailer resting on two flat tires, a brush corral, a flatbed truck with dismantled engine, a watertank and its windmill with motionless vanes, a great glittering heap of tincans; no men or sheep visible" (13). This dead and sick area which meets his eye is a strong counterpart to the harmonious, living world which was depicted at the beginning of the chapter. The two pass "other signs and stigmata of life," and find rusty tincans and other sorts of garbage everywhere which made them sure "they were nearing civilization" (14). The garbage and heaps of trash mirror the wasteful life in the

city. Burns, in contrast, tidies up after himself, making sure his camp is clean for the next time he might pass by.

Another contrast to the “zone of silence” in the canyon landscape is the sound of the city (15). Note how the noise from the city is described in the following passage:

... though he could not see the city he could hear it; a continuous droning roar, the commingled vibrations of ten thousand automobiles, trucks, tractors, airplanes, locomotives, the hum and whine of fifty thousand radios, telephones, television receivers, the vast murmur of a hundred thousand human voices, the great massive muttering of friction and busyness and mechanical agitation. (15)

The passage builds up like a massive sound picture starting with the thundering roar of the vehicles, and continues with the smaller noisy technical inventions, the buzzing sound of people talking, and ends with the tiny, but still mumbling sounds of all kinds of activity. The distant hum of the city drowns almost all other sounds as Burns rides on towards Duke City. A few crows “squawking anxiously” cause a “fine haze of dust” to filter “down from the trembling leaves” (17). A neighborhood is described as being neat, but dead as its surroundings of “dead sunflowers” (19). The sharp-edged and clean-cut form of the neighborhood reflects the people who live within suburban boundaries. As if imprisoned, “the women remained indoors and stared out with pale bleak faces” towards the prim fences that separate the houses from their neighbor (19). Maintaining an orderly exterior, the buildings, made of “cement or brick or cinder blocks with a stucco finish” rather than of organic materials such as wood, only house soulless people (19). In this ghostlike town of hypocrites, Burns passes “a big new graveyard laid out like a model housing project,” and “a big new housing project laid out like a model graveyard” (21).

There is no doubt that the novel expresses dismay at the cold and artificial suburbs. The portrayals predict the future when we see how residential areas are planned and built today. We often see large, impersonal residential areas

planned and rapidly built which lack a pleasant atmosphere. Today the soulless outskirts are no better than the dead downtown areas in the city. And in the skeptic *Brave Cowboy*, any decisions in the cities are made in “an underground poker game, in the vaults of the First National Bank, in the secret chambers of The Factory, in the backroom of the realtor’s office during the composition of an intricate swindle” (13). The activities in the downtown areas of Duke City are kept secret, as if they were criminal activities. This culture of secrecy, dishonesty, and betrayal is set in the city.

The defective urban culture in *The Brave Cowboy* is also pictured in the scenes with Hinton, the truck driver who has cancer. Coming from the East, he drives into the Southwest in a truck carrying new technology in “ACME Bathroom Fixtures!” under the ironic motto “America builds for tomorrow!” (41). Addicted to Dexadrine, an anti-depressive and amphetamine-containing drug, Hinton stops for coffee at a “chrome-plated neonized redbrick restaurant” and is served by a waitress with a big wen in her face (41). The dialogue between them is paltry, possibly illustrating the townspeople’s lack of ability to communicate. The fact that Hinton comes to the Southwest from the East, imposing goods based on false premises, illustrates the notion of how many Southwesterners felt that their region was overrun by laws, regulations, and technological disasters planned by the politicians and other experts in Washington.

The city is also a dreadful place in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. In this novel the over-crowded cities have increased noise and pollution. Doc Sarvis’ patients in “Sick City” are both drug addicts and impotent (Abbey 1992b, 120). The towns have grown into cold centers where the twinkling neon lights and tall buildings have replaced the stars and the rocky mesas. Their blocks, steep like slickrock cliffs, have become poor imitations of the real canyon landscape outside. In the following passage Doc and Bonnie are driving his Lincoln Continental into the same town Jack Burns entered about 25 years earlier. The

cars on the road are “stripped-down zonked-up Mustangs, Impalas, Stingrays and Beetles,” names that suggest living creatures (7). Doc and Bonnie

advanced, in thoughtful silence, toward the jittery neon, the spastic anapestic rock, the apoplectic roll of Saturday night in Albuquerque, New Mexico.... Down Glassy Gulch they drove toward the twenty-story towers of finance burning like blocks of radium under the illuminated smog. (8-9)

The two are stunned by what they see as they enter Albuquerque. The whole area is pictured as a cold, polluted, and artificial town, and contrasts greatly an eloquent description of another area a few pages later in the novel. There the “Vermilion Cliffs shine pink as watermelon in the light of the setting sun, headland after headland of perpendicular sandstone; each rock profile wears a mysterious, solemn, inhuman nobility” (23).

In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* there is no life or hope in or for the cities. Many of the smaller cities and towns that were built on prosperous dreams of wealth and fortune following the development of different projects have become ghost towns. One such town is Glen Canyon City where “a sign at the only store says, ‘Fourty [sic] Million \$Dollar Power Plant To Be Built Twelve Miles From Here Soon’” (26). However, as the narrator explains: “Glen Canyon City (NODUMPING) rots and rusts at the side of the road like a burned out Volkswagen forgotten in a weedy lot to atrophy... Many pass but no one pauses” (26). The dream of a dynamic city is shattered as no one wishes to live within the city limits.

While the Southwest once had been a place where asthmatic people from the urban cities in the East could be sent to recover, it now offers nothing but filthy air. As described in the novel, the city of Albuquerque was already experiencing periods during the day “when schoolchildren were forbidden to play outside in the “open” air, heavy breathing being more dangerous than child molesters” (193). In addition to the increasing amount of pollution, which is emphasized in the novel, the book also mentions the fact that chemicals are

added in food and drinks. Having breakfast at “Mom’s Café” all, but Doc, “drank the chlorinated orange “drink,” ate the premixed frozen glue-and-cotton pancakes and the sodium-nitrate sodium-nitrite sausages, and drank the carbolic coffee” (185). As these quotes indicate, people in the cities are being poisoned by the polluted air they inhale, as well as by the toxic food they ingest.

The consequences of this harmful consumption is presented in *Hayduke Lives!*. The accumulation of decay, from the garbage and sickness in *The Brave Cowboy* to the pollution and lifeless cities in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* has terrible consequences. The city population experience mental and physical strains. In Salt Lake City:

the evening traffic flowed through the slush and grime of Sixth South and State Street. Horns honked in forlorn desperation, anxious for stable, dry straw and feed stall; sirens wailed like banshees from Hell; giant jets screamed through the smog above, their landing lights aglare, the pilots popping pills. (Abbey 1990c, 149)

In this city, cars, streets, and people are all influenced by each other and the filthy atmosphere. Their depressive state is conveyed by the desperate sounds they all make. In George Hayduke’s fantasy, however, the cities, once gone, will become a place where “sunflowers push up through the concrete and asphalt of the forgotten freeways,” and where “the Kremlin and the Pentagon are turned into nursing homes for generals, presidents and other such shitheads” (Abbey 1992b, 88-89).

The Authorities

"A planetary industrialism" the doctor ranted on -
"growing like a cancer. Growth for the sake of growth.
Power for the sake of power..."
-*The Monkey Wrench Gang*

The authorities, situated in the cities, administrating the machines are the novels' ultimate enemies and concern. The power of such enormous political machines is alarming. The authorities are powerful because, as Seldom states, "they own the guvmint, George, you know that. They own the politicians, the judges, the Tee Vee, the army, the po-lice. They own ever' damn thing they need to own" (Abbey 1990c, 121). In order to develop and progress "it feeds" on churches, stores, hospitals, public transportation, and public parks choking their own ability to develop as independent parts of the society. In Doc Sarvis' opinion, it is reminiscent of a

global kraken, pantentacled, wall-eyed and parrot-beaked, its brain a bank of computer data centers, its blood the flow of money, its heart a radioactive dynamo, its language the technetronic monologue of number imprinted on magnetic tape.
(Abbey 1992b, 142)

Again the Machine is animated, and again the description is merciless. The image of a "global kraken," is used to reiterate the concept of the authorities as a monstrous machine. The association to computers and technology, on the other hand, emphasizes the authorities' technological dimensions.

The portrayals of the authorities are quite different in the three novels. In *The Brave Cowboy*, questions are raised concerning the conflict between the modern urbanized social institutions and the rights of the individual. In the novel there is no room for those who do not want to submit themselves to the restrictive laws of the establishment. Jack Burns is arrested for vagrancy and for not adapting to the rules of this society. *The Brave Cowboy* was written during

the Cold War when the United States' fear of communism was at its peak. Anyone who did not submit to American law and order was at once suspected of being an anarchist "against all government" and "worse than Communists" (176).

In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*, the individual is no longer able to escape from the authorities as Jack Burns tried to in *The Brave Cowboy*. Rather, he has to fight to secure his/her individual rights. The authorities, who have fought different wars outside U.S. territory, are now confronted by a domestic enemy, bringing the battlefield to their own backyard. However, in order to handle this new enemy, the authorities have become more subtle in their approach. The CIA and the FBI use infiltrators in order to uncover what they see as criminal activities among the monkeywrenchers. In addition, honesty as a virtue has been replaced by the desire for profit. In the two novels, the authorities are characterized as egocentric and false. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*, the demand for growth results in inflationary development projects such as building "three bridges to cross one river" (Abbey 1992b, 98). The authorities announce that the bridges are built to help people across the canyons in their small cars. The truth is, in fact, that they are built to get heavy machinery to various natural resources and to deplete these. This illustrates a common assumption that authorities, by holding back information or through misinformation, manage to bypass regulations that most certainly would have been opposed if their true objectives had been discovered by the public.

Even though some people do what they can to protest or even ecotage against planned development projects, too many people are not informed about scheduled construction work. Too often the "media though invited... fail[s] to appear" because the powerful governmental or industrial corporations control the media and decide on whatever event they are to cover (Abbey 1990c,239). "The decisions," we are told "are made discreetly, quietly, by a few important people meeting on the golf course, in the boardroom, at lunch.... A few brief

phone calls to the appropriate TV, radio and newspaper bureau chiefs settled the matter" (239). By controlling the media, the authorities can choose between information that can be broadcasted and that which must be suppressed, or deliberately distorted by telling lies "that easily become[s] religious dogma in the bureaucratic mentality" (190). However, whenever the authorities *do* talk, their spokespersons tend to use persuasive argumentation, which is another characteristic feature of the authorities. Note how Bishop Love, in the following passage, makes a political reversal of Martin Luther King's famous "I have a dream..." speech, turning it into an argument in favor of unlimited development.

I have a dream, my friends. I have a dream of America for Americans, where never again will a single square foot of our land be locked up for selfish elitist preservationists but where everything will be accessible to everybody in their own automobile and where industry can move in unhindered for the spirit of free enterprise that made America what it is today to provide jobs for everyone that's willing to work instead of wilderness playgrounds for greedy extreme elitist Sahara Clubbers and other wild dangerous animals. I have a dream, my friends, of America where people come first - up with people! - people and industry and jobs and unlimited opportunity for anybody with the guts and the glory to take advantage of America's glorious opportunity for everybody. That's my dream, my friends... my dream of the America I used to love and the America I expect to love again. That's my dream, my friends. What's yours? (260)

This passage shows a line of argument that is often used by politicians who are more concerned with their own political ambitions than with the lives of the people they represent. In his speech, Bishop Love calls for people to support *his* vision of a prosperous society. And he uses phrases of patriotism, such as "America for Americans," which disarms his listeners. He also identifies an enemy, the "Sahara Clubbers,"¹¹ identifying one of their opponents. In addition, Bishop Love talks about "the spirit of free enterprise," "unlimited opportunity," and "loving America," which are phrases that immediately attract attention, and in this crowd, approval.

¹¹ This name refers to the Sierra Club, a conservative environmental organization founded in the 1890s, by explorer and naturalist John Muir. See footnote no. 9, page 41.

Part of the discussion between the environmentalists and the authorities concerns the valuation of people versus property. Environmentalists believe that there is nothing as valuable as biological diversity, in which human beings also belong. The authorities, on the other hand, favor the view that property and machines are most valuable and important since they form the basis of economic growth, which in turn is a necessity for human development. The following scene from *The Brave Cowboy* illustrates how the authorities value machines and people differently. When Jack Burns damages a helicopter, his action is condemned by Air Force General Desalius. “[W]hat have you done to my helicopter,” he roars. And continues:

Is this nonsense true that that jailbreaker, that scum, that common vagrant, shot down my helicopter?... I’ll blast him off the face of the earth!... Why I’ll burn him out with napalm. I’ll cook him with phosphorous!... By god, I’ll drop an atomic bomb on the bastard! (Abbey 1992a, 257-258)

According to this passage, it seems that it is easier for the authorities to justify killing or neutralizing people rather than allowing their machines to be damaged. Thus, the value of machines and property is considerably higher than the lives of people, and in the novels the disparity of the penalties for damaging machines and harming people is significant. Hayduke, busy dismantling a bulky Caterpillar, wonders about the \$30,000 down payment on the heavy equipment. “What were the men worth?” he asks, and wonders whether people are “[g]etting cheaper by the day, as mass production lowers the unit cost” (Abbey 1992b, 73-74). As long as human beings are not respected or valued, a dominant authority will continue to let them be of secondary importance. In such a society there are no options left for those who do not want to submit themselves to the dominant views. Such a Machine will do, and indeed does, what it can to control its population, and any member of such a civilization is “...caught in the iron threads of a technological juggernaut, [a] mindless

machine..." as Doc Sarvis notes (54).

In the novels, it seems that it is only the Gang, and a few others, who are alarmed by the authorities' quest for "progress." "The only folks want this road," Smith says to Bonnie, "are the mining companies and the oil companies and people like Bishop Love. And the Highway Department, where their religion is building roads" (258). The "engineers' dream" is to straighten every curve, flatten every surface until the earth itself becomes smooth as a modern high-speed highway¹² (66). The megalomaniac Mormon Bishop Love supports this dream, and wants to develop the canyon plateaus by "building golf courses and swimming pools and condominiums and selling hotdogs and postcards to a million tourists a year" (Abbey 1990c, 135).

Doc Sarvis reflects on the authorities enormous desire for profit and development of "effort-gigant machines, road networks, strip mines, conveyor belt, pipelines... ten thousand miles of high-tension towers and high-voltage power lines, the devastation of the landscape" (Abbey 1992b, 143). He realizes that what "all that backbreaking expense and all that heartbreaking insult to land and sky and human heart" amounts to, is just "to light the lamps of Phoenix suburbs not yet built" (144). And due to this greedy yearn for growth, Bonnie is bewildered to notice that a corporation "had to build a whole new power plant to supply energy to the power plant which was the same power plant the power plant supplied - the wizardry of reclamation engineers!" (144). In their opinion, growth is "the spread of the ideology of the cancer cell" (186). The comparison between authorities and cancer cells is not farfetched. The purpose of them both is growth, and in order to become larger and more powerful, they kill from within. Additionally, they are very difficult to get rid of once they have started to grow and spread.

¹² As a matter of curiosity it is interesting to draw a parallel from the engineers' dream to a verse in the Bible, by Luke, which reads that: "Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth" (Luke 3:5). Having the this in mind, it may seem that the developers have adopted the verse. (The verse is from *The Holy Bible; New International Version*. 1978. London: Hodder and Stoughton.)

If we want an enduring wilderness, it is important to challenge this growth ethic, and since accessibility fuels consumption, it is the increasing development and production of goods that has to be stopped. In order to save what is left of individuality and wilderness, the authorities' ideology and mentality has to change. In the three novels, there is a major distinction between "the good guys," who understand and stay in harmony and in league with nature, and "the bad guys." One of many who is not environmentally conscious is Sheriff Johnson's operator.

The operator looked around at the sun-splashed cottonwoods trembling with golden light, at the twisted junipers and tall spears of yucca on the slopes, at the blue rock beyond the spring, at the mountain and immaculate sky roaring above him. "This godawful stinkin place. Huh, Morey?" (Abbey 1992a, 242-3)

Being alien to the wilderness obstructs one's ability to respect and understand it. Here the operator fails to notice the value of the "sun-splashed cottonwoods," or the "blue rock beyond the spring." Instead the insecure operator finds it barren and empty of elements from his modern, developed world. The wilderness thus becomes a foreign sphere, the "other world," which civilization feels obligated to dominate (292).

The authorities like to argue that everything scarce is valuable, and that it should be developed for the common good. There is a general agreement that e.g. granite in itself has no economic value because there is too much of it, while gold, being rare, is extremely valuable. However, the authorities seem to have forgotten, or failed to notice, that wild landscape is now becoming scarce, and the value these areas hold reach new heights every time another wilderness area is turned into a development project.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Monkeywrenchers!

Who They Are

Jack Burns

"Where's your papers?" he said....
"Don't have none. Don't need none. I already know who I am."
-*The Brave Cowboy*

In *The Brave Cowboy*, Jack Burns is the smart, tough western hero who lets himself get jailed in order to save a friend, although ends up being chased like a coyote by an anarchist-fearing police corps. At the same time he is the noble knight-errant who bakes bread and offers to do the dishes. Throughout the three novels, Burns remains a modest but determined individual who refuses to submit to the authorities and their laws and regulations

When we first meet him in *The Brave Cowboy*, Burns is a young man who has chosen not to "tune [his] life to the numbers on a calendar" (Abbey 1992a, 159). Dressed in what would be recognized as a typical cowboy outfit from the last century, Burns refuses to submit to the modern way of life and favors the freedom that the carefree life of the cowboy gives him. 30 years later, in *Hayduke Lives!*, he is still the same cowboy, although he now bears evidence of having lived a tough life. Totally out of fashion and style the man is

seated on the sagging middle of the horse's back [wearing] wrinkled darkblue pants smeared with with bacon grease on thigh and hip, high boots with rusty spurs, a dirty baggy once-white shirt of weird design (no collar, double row of buttons up the front), the dusty black scarf (of anarchism?) tied about the neck, dirty white gloves with high gauntlets, and a dirty white ten-gallon comical hat with four-inch brim. (Abbey 1990c, 27)

Regardless of his weary looks, Burns refuses to give in. He continues to be the old western hero who fights for his ideas and who stays by his friends, never to “sacrifice a friend to an ideal... never desert a friend to save an institution” (Abbey 1992a, 109).

As a true cowboy, he does, in fact, have as close bonds to his horses as any man would have to his wife. Talking to Hayduke about Erika, Burns says: “How’d you like that filly with the long mane and the high-set tail? Good hindquarters, too” (Abbey 1990c, 211). Here Burns uses the same vocabulary when talking about women and horses. He is described by Jerry as a “smoky-eyed centaur” (Abbey 1992a, 30), who “looks better on a horse” than on foot (39). And in *The Brave Cowboy*, Burns’ love for horses is challenged several times when he faces the dilemma of having to choose between his horse and his freedom.

“[T]he inevitable thought came, that he might be better off without the horse, might make the crest of the mountain easily, if alone, and lose himself in the forest on the east. He considered the proposition and rejected it. (263)

Burns is so devoted to his horse that he chooses to take the mare with him, although he risks losing his freedom. However, after having considered the situation, he is prepared to take a chance which unfortunately results in a dreadful accident at the end of the novel. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* Burns is never seen off his horse again as “he never walked. Never. Nowhere (Abbey 1990c, 274). In fact “[t]hey turned together, man and horse, one animal, one centaur, one creation out of myth by history, and trotted away into the night” (291).

In *The Brave Cowboy*, Burns’ frustration towards the authorities is vented by cutting fences and refusing to carry any form of identification. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, he approves of the illegal monkey wrench business, although he

does not do anything himself, but observes the activity of others from his position in the background. "But I can see you do a good job. Thorough. I like that," he says (Abbey 1992b, 199). Finally, in *Hayduke Lives!* his friendship with Hayduke culminates in a tight partnership against their fellow enemy. Even though the first is about 30 years older than the other, the two become very close friends, and Hayduke even calls Burns "dad" (Abbey 1990c, 291), and "Grandpa" (211). Always mounted, Burns' job is to keep watch while Hayduke lights a fuse or dismantles a bulldozer. Even though he carries two legendary hand-made .44-calibers, Burns rarely turns to violence. However, once, in order to prevent his friends from being arrested, the peaceful cowboy actually shoots and kills a security guard.

"You killed that poor bastard, Jack."

"I know it. Was afraid somebody'd get hurt. Them overload hollow-points do make a mess."

"Shot him dead."

"I know it, boys. The old one-eye hain't what it used to be. I don't feel to good about it. Nor too bad neither." (289)

He saves his friends but has mixed feelings about the way it is done. "I was aimin' at that shotgun," he explains, "meant to shoot it out of his hand, like the Lone Ranger hisself always done in the funny papers" (290). From actually apologizing to a doe before cutting its throat in *The Brave Cowboy*, Burns has become tougher in the course of the novels.

The rugged individuals have become idealized, especially in American movies which have a long tradition of admiring the lone man who challenges society. John Wayne is one of the great heroes from the 30s to the late 60s. Sylvester Stallone has experienced similar popularity in the 80s and 90s. Both actors have played the role of the rugged individual whose mission is to bring peace, law, and order to the "wilderness." It is without doubt that their roles have helped perpetuate the myth of the independent and individual "cowboy." Jack

Burns, on the other hand, varies somewhat from this tradition as he questions the meaning of law and order. Burns believes that if law and order restricts man's freedom, then one should oppose such law and order by all means. He has the same respect for the courthouse as the dog that "came trotting up to the courthouse steps... cock[ed] one leg and piss[ed] on the municipal shrubbery" before it "disappeared around the corner and headed for Mexico" (Abbey 1992a, 180). In *The Brave Cowboy* one of the things which worries Jack Burns is slaving for the megamachine. He sees drafting as a modern way of slavery, where the individual is ordered out to fight, to defend the society that enforces rules and regulations which restrict the freedom of the individual. Burns, too, believes that "[s]ubmission to slavery is the ultimate moral disgrace," and that it is better to "[l]ive free or die" (Abbey 1990c, 234).

While Wayne and Stallone portray heroes that protect the society from its enemies, Burns tries to protect the individual from its society. His anger grows through the course of the three novels, and in *Hayduke Lives!* Hayduke explains Burns' frustration to Doc Sarvis:

"Old Jack there, he's got only one thing on his mind: revenge."

"Revenge for what?"

Hayduke looked surprised. "What country you live in, Doc? You forget what it was like out here, only forty years ago? Only twenty? ten?" (173)

It is Burns' view that the American society has deteriorated so quickly that the worst possible future is already present. He feels that not only are the authorities trying to control the individual, but they are also destroying the few peaceful places that remain.

Burns, the devoted anarchist, refuses to be part of the modern American society which pens up people "like a rat in a cage" (Abbey 1992a, 112). "This is cruel," he says, "I wouldn't do it to a dumb animal" (110-111). He distrusts the banks and keeps all his money in his saddle-bags. "Banks? Don't trust em -

bunch of crooks," he says (39). In his opinion, schools are simply a place where kids are taught the views of the authorities: "So the little fella's in school already; that's a damn shame," he says to Paul Bondi's wife Jerry (29). Believing in the "school of life," Burns would rather teach the young "better things" like "how to track deer, how to fish through ice, how to trap the silver fox, how to make things, useful things..." (101).

What is important with Jack Burns' role in the novels is that he survives, not only tough years of riding in the desert but the authorities' attempts to bring him down. As Ness remarks, Burns "will not die" because in Abbey's opinion the "ideal must not" (Ness 1990, 459). Letting the brave cowboy stand firm suggests that the ideas he holds must do the same. And to show how dynamic and immortal these are, Abbey ends his last novel with a scene of Jack Burns which brings us back to the spirit in *The Brave Cowboy*. Instead of closing with the Western cliché of a cowboy riding into the sunset, we meet the cowboy in the early morning, ready to take on any new confrontations with the Machine. Mounted, as always,

[t]he horseman on the canyon rim, missing little that's alive and in motion, observes the rebirth of the desert turtle and doffs his big hat in salute. He replaces the hat and resumes his vigil, gazing toward the horizon for a sign of the enemy. Nothing this morning. After a while he blows his nose on the ground, wipes a finger on the horse's haunch, turns the horse and rides away. (Abbey 1990c, 308)

George Washington Hayduke

Through the afternoon he continued *his* project toward the north-west, into the sun, nullifying in one day the patient, skilled, month-long work of four men.
-*The Monkey Wrench Gang*

George Washington Hayduke is definitely the principal character in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!*. Named after a much more famous American, Hayduke believes *he is* the “father of his country” (Abbey 1990c, 274). Returning to the Southwest as a Vietnam veteran, he finds the country he used to know very different, as if “[s]omeone or something was changing things” (Abbey 1992, 13). Just like Burns, Hayduke, too, seems to follow the Western formula where tough men subscribe to “frontier justice,” where the law is interpreted according to the need. He takes matters into his own hands, asking himself: “Who needs their bloody stinking law?” (302). Motivated by “a high and noble purpose,” he sets off to free his country from whatever is destroying it (127). In the novels, Hayduke makes use of his three years of warfare experience in the U.S. army to turn his rage against that same country, because as a true patriot he is “ready to defend his country against his government” (Abbey 1990b, 19). All these elements combined make Hayduke the perfect eco-warrior, as he becomes a man of heroic dedication to his mission.

Hayduke dreams of a world where “free men and wild women on horses, free women and wild men, can roam the sagebrush canyonlands in freedom” (Abbey 1992b, 88-89). Although he realizes that his dream would only last until the next Iron Age, if ever fulfilled, he does his best to make it come true. “[Y]ou’re so enthusiastic,” says Doc Sarvis, “You frighten me” (146). And Hayduke’s eagerness actually scares his friends, which he sees as a compliment. In fact, he tries to scare his enemies too. After one of his countless raids, he leaves “his signature in the sand: NEMO,” which is short for the

Scottish motto 'Nemo me impune lacesit,' meaning 'no one attack me with impunity'¹³ (127). Hayduke is confident that if he ever is caught, he will take several of his enemies with him to hell.

George Hayduke's determination and agitated mood indicate that he represents the spirit of rebellion in the novels. He is the one who always has a new scheme figured out, who continuously reminds the others of everything that is worth fighting for and how it can be done. In his cave, a secret hide-out in the desert, he has stored various revolutionary and suppressed books. Among the well-read books, one find "*The Blaster's Handbook*," a book by the "British Ministry of Prisons," as well as "a cheap paperback copy of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, tattered ,greasy, dog-eared, heavily annotated with scornful exclamation points..." (Abbey 1990c, 178-179). To keep guard outside the entrance to the cave, he has a venomous "fat diamondback [a rattlesnake], five feet long" with its "black tongue out, tail up and twitching" (178). Seldom Smith who has had the unpleasant experience of discovering the snake, is still not quite surprised. "[W]ho but *him* would keep a goldarn buzzworm around for a watchdog" he says to himself (178). This snake reflects the wild, impulsive nature of Hayduke, and every time he sees a bulldozer, he becomes "alive again, animated" (Abbey 1992b, 262). Where Burns bases his action on theory, Hayduke bases everything on action. "Hayduke was a saboteur of much wrath but little brain," the narrative voice tells us (190).

At the beginning of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, George Hayduke is 25 years old. And being younger than the others, he also represents the perpetual spirit of youth. To Hayduke's satisfaction, Doc Sarvis states that "The eco-war is only for the young" as it requires both physical and mental strength (Abbey 1990c, 114). Although one may at some points be tempted to question Hayduke's mental state, his immature behavior does not change in the course of the novels, and he is the same boy at the beginning of *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

¹³ Edward Abbey probably learned this motto the year he studied at the University of Edinburgh.

as he is at the end of *Hayduke Lives!*. "Let them fuckers change, not me" he says to Bonnie (115). Although he is engaged in shrewd monkey wrench activity, she regards him as a "hotheaded brain-damaged overemotional child. Hyperactive type" (Abbey 1992b, 233). He is even as curious as a child, and can never leave "the scene of the crime" until he has seen the result of his action. When Smith suggests that "we ought to be fifty miles away from here come morning," Hayduke answers: "Not me. I'm going to hang around and watch what happens. I want that personal fucking satisfaction" (77). All the time, his fingers are itching to dismantle a bulldozer or pull up survey stakes. Driving along a major highway to a chosen bridge, the eco-warrior becomes aware of something:

Hayduke was staring at something ahead, away from the road. Bulky black silhouettes of steel against the green glow of sunset lingering in the sky.... He pulled the jeep off the road and parked it behind a clump of trees....
"Now what?" she said.
"Bulldozers," Alive again, animated, his moroseness gone. "Two of them. Big mothers."
"Well?"
"Better check them out."
"Oh no. Not now, George. What about the bridges?"
"They'll keep. This won't take long."
"You always say that. And then you disappear for seven days. Shit." (262)

Instead of keeping his eyes fixed on the road while driving, which "normal" people would do, Hayduke is always on the hunt for any potential targets. And once he finds one, his mood immediately improves. Actually, he can not even do one raid at a time, but *has to* stop and monkey wrench any machine he by chance encounters. And his three companions have to wait until he gets back.

Like Jack Burns, Hayduke has an incredible way of disappearing before his pursuers' eyes. Both of them are able to vanish, like evaporating water, like ghosts, just as they are about to get caught. With his many crafty plans and fake I.D.'s, Hayduke slips inn and slides out of any place or situation. "He always gets

away, Smith says. "They'll have to kill him. The government's probably figured that out by now" (Abbey 1990c, 227). However, once the authorities are certain they have finished him off, he turns up again after a little while. In the following scene, "old" Jack Burns has come to Doc's houseboat and asks:

"You believe in ghosts, Doc?"

The doctor thinks. "I believe in the ghosts that haunt the human mind."

"This one ain't that kind."

"No?"

"He is real. He's come a long way."

"Well," says Doc, a trifle shakily, "let's see him. Let's see this phenomenon. Where is he?"...

"I'm right up here, Doc," says a familiar voice.

Doc feels the skin crawl on the back of his neck. (Abbey 1992b, 343-344)

The situation scares Doc, and he reacts in the same way as one does entering a house of horrors. The fact that Burns states "He's come a long way," and the word 'phenomenon' might suggest that Hayduke is not of this world. Being the spirit of youth and rebellion, Hayduke can not die as long as there are machines and authorities that threaten both land and man. He resurrects when everybody thinks he is gone, only to fight harder for his cause. Another "single and posthumous (out of the earth) detail," is found a few pages earlier in the same novel (341). As the four friends are chased by Bishop Love and his Search & Rescue Team, Smith tries his best to find an outlet from the canyon. But he could "see no way for a human to get started up those slick and tricky surfaces. Perhaps a human fly. Perhaps a human Hayduke..." (Abbey 1992b, 304).

Erika and the Earth First!ers

"I speak because i luff zee desert wilderness.
I speak because I cannot sit aside, like bush, like stone,
like stupid chump, when zee big machine comes every day
closer to ziss place vee luff like home."
-*Hayduke Lives!*

In *Hayduke Lives!* we are introduced to a new protagonist. Erika is the "Girl-Viking, Nordic goddess of beauty... representing the song of Norway, the mind of Arne Naess, the spirit of Grieg, Nielsen, Sibelius, the beauty of Greta Garbo"(Abbey 1990c, 187). She has come from Scandinavia to America to find Oral Hatch, the Mormon missionary whom she fell in love with in her home country. However, once in the U.S., she ends up leading a group of Earth First!ers in an environmental battle against Bishop Love and his development projects. Although Earth First! proudly proclaims that "We got no leaders. We're all leaders," Erika soon becomes their spokeswoman (231). Her role is accepted because the group "yearn for a king - or a queen, rather" to lead them (208). Erika comes to their rescue. She is "able to say the right thing at the right time, willing to place [her]self up front when the enemy appears" (231). She holds all necessary qualities for a leader, she is smart, good-looking, energetic, has ideas, and guts. But her special quality, which enables her to unify many people, is her "spiritual vitality" (231).

In the novel, Erika becomes a mythic symbol of beauty and nature's advocate. "As a Nordic flower," and with her "hair... like a lion's mane from crown of head to swell of crupper," Erika is "a work of natural art.... so beautiful that she exist[s] somewhere beyond the envy of other women" (205). In Pagan religions, the earth is worshiped as "Mother," and Erika is worshiped in the same way by the ones around her. Like Hayduke, she, too, is of another world. Erika is, in fact, *the* earth goddess, the "*Liberté*," who has come to save the natural world from ruin (205). She wishes to liberate nature by helping, and with

the help of, the environmental movement, to stop the bulldozers from leveling the canyons. With the same willpower as the juniper "thrust[ing] its burnished gray claw toward the blue," (25) Erika "thrust her right fist *ad astra* and shouted at the milling mulling moiling musing merry multitude - 'Zee Eart' She First!' " (205). She is armed with nothing but "a small American flag," which she holds up like a crucifix before her (89). Before she knows it, her life is at stake as she is confronted by angry developers driving their bulldozers. Chained to a juniper, Erika takes on the role of a new Jeanne d'Arc risking to be "douse[d]... with diesel" and "set... on fire" (254).

The female characters in the novel all voice their own environmental views. Their feminine spirit of nurturing and protectionism is reflected in its non-violent form, through civil disobedience, for instance. Erika, always on the speaker's list, is aware of the important role she has within the movement and takes the opportunity to encourage a civil disobedience demonstration. She declares that:

Ven GOLIATH he gets to zee Neck I am being there to stop him. I put my body where he comes. But not all by my alone person must I surely hope. I ask for sisters, brothers, comrades, put your body where I put my body. I say - and ziss iss joke, yes? but also more than joke, I say - put your body where your mouse is. Vee talk big, vee talk very tough, now iss time to show vee act like talk, no? Yass? Ja? (206)

Her infinite number of battle-cries and frequent appeals to "do something," are finally paid off when she manages to unite the Earth Firstlers in a road blockade. "I think," says Smith's third wife Susan, "when it comes down to the nitty gritty that women are braver than men" (241). According to the women "They [men] never was [sic] much good at... this passive resistance thing" (241). Unfortunately, to the women's astonishment, the whole crowd get arrested during the demonstration, and Erika is sent back to Norway charged of being a "criminal anarchist" (296).

Abbey's use of a Scandinavian protagonist can be linked to Abbey's two

weeks visit in Norway and Sweden during spring of 1952. There he had personal experiences with the "Nordic blondes," as well as with the snow-covered slopes at Finse. However, it might have been the romantic notions of Nordic myths and legends that inspired Abbey. One of the last areas in Europe to accept the Christian faith was Scandinavia, which has, to some extent, been associated with paganism. And in *Hayduke Lives!*, the Mormon missionary Oral Hatch is sent to "the slender pendant barely tumescent damned Gentile nation of Norway" to help out (49). The liberated nation has a firm environmental point of view, which makes Scandinavia become a symbol of independence, fertility, and radical environmentalism. As a oppositional force in the novel, the references to Norway and Sweden are used to counter the world of "technological progress" represented by the patriarchal, commercial forces of Bishop Love and the American authorities.

Rangerette Virginia H. Dick, who in *Hayduke Lives!* becomes Love's second wife, is an interesting juxtaposition to Erika. As a rangerette for the local administration, she does not favor the demonstrations, led by Erika and the Earth First!ers, in themselves. But she shares Erika's views on nature's beauty and importance. And both women find the authority's desire for progress quite ridiculous.

Great thinking, fellas. (What a pack of inbred idiots.) Smiling herself, amused rather than annoyed by the Bishop's techno-industrial fantasies, which she tended to regard as merely one more example of the comic male lust to always improve on nature, to organize, exploit, design and dominate... Rangerette Dick held to the roll bars.... (135)

Virginia reacts with indulgence to Love's future plans as if she knew that they will never be fulfilled, or that they are only a part of a male's "childish" and greedy fantasies. Her thoughts are close to the eco-feminists' who state that the destruction of nature is largely committed by men, a continuation of their exploitation of women. Ironically, Virginia is dressed in uniform, "like a man"

(85).

In *Hayduke Lives!*, both Erika and Hayduke are representatives of what is best for us. Because, in order to survive, we need Erika's love as well as Hayduke's spirit of rebellion. And to become the ultimate eco-warrior, one has to hold the qualities of both "the Beauty" and "the Beast."

Having Erika's determination to "do something" in mind, the Earth Firsters in *Hayduke Lives!* are nothing but a group of ineffective hippies. According to the novel, the Earth Firsters' anarchistic ideology has evolved from the Industrial Workers of the World's (I.W.W.) protest against industries mixed with environmental motives. Earth First!, consisting of eco-marxists, eco-feminists, as well as deep ecologists, and antihumanists, all trying to emphasize *their* "green" ideology, becomes a hotchpotch of environmental ideas. The fact that there are so many opposing views among the Earth Firsters results in internal organizational problems. Although they organize workshops and rallies, the Earth Firsters prove to be incompetent when it comes to being "effective environmentalists." Since they do not wish to take part in ecotage, they confine themselves instead to acts of civil disobedience by waving banners at rallies, participating in road blockings, tree sits, and a few incidents of tree spiking.

Initially, the group of Earth Firsters in *Hayduke Lives!* claim to be the most persistent environmentalists who wish to "act like talk." On the other hand, however, their slogans cry for initiatives that demand illegal action in order to be accomplished. Consequently, they end up in a dilemma between wishing to "do something," and their moral obligation to be the peaceful and "fun-loving anarchists [they] pretend to be" (202). And according to Doc Sarvis, as the I.W.W. was made passive in the 1920s, the Earth Firsters only

last until they become effective. Then the state moves in, railroad some of the leaders into prison, murders a few others for educational purposes, clubs and gasses and jails the followers and *voilà!* - peace and order are restored. (230)

Once at stake, the Earth First!ers' demonstrative campaign fails completely as they are all handcuffed, and hauled away to waiting police vans.

It must be said to their favor that even though the Earth First!ers are portrayed as a bunch of "red savages, beating drums, laughing like idiots, howling at the moon," they are representatives of a new and aware generation compared to the "old" Monkey Wrench Gang (208). An implied notion, or wish, in *Hayduke Lives!* is that these young men and women one day will have gained so much experience, that they, too, will become qualified to continue the fight against the Machine. In the novel, the Earth First!ers celebrate life and youth with their "Down With Empire!, Up With *Spring!*" slogans. Their "mass outburst of angelic demonology" and natural energy makes everyone present remember the "sense of life that cannot be expressed" (190). This perception is conveyed by a vision of paradise where flute players accompany youth in merry play.

Why They All Do It

"Because," Hayduke explained, one last time, patiently.
"Because somebody has to do it. That's why."
- *The Monkey Wrench Gang*

Today, environmental organizations are busy clamoring the various environments in jeopardy, asking for our support in their work. In *Hayduke Lives!*, Earth First! carry flags with slogans such as "AMERICAN WILDERNESS: Love It or Leave It alone!" and "Syn-Fuels Is Sinful! Sunshine Is Good!" (81). If someone asked "why?" he/she would probably be met with a unanimous cry like: "Because somebody has to do it. That's why," as Hayduke declares in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (Abbey 1992b, 158). Personal involvement and concern for the vanishing wilderness often result in subjective and emotional arguments. These arguments tend to be highly emotional among wilderness preservationists who, on request, might find it difficult to come up with an objective answer to such a question. There are, however, several reasonable arguments in favor of protecting the wilderness.

"The world exists for its own sake," Abbey said, "not for ours" (Abbey 1990b, 89). The statement illustrates the intrinsic value of nature which is, to many, the most important argument in the defense of the wilderness. Hayduke is aware of this point of view when he states that the American Southwest is the home of "free creatures: horned toads, desert rats, Gila monsters and coyotes" (Abbey 1992b, 13). This nonanthropocentric point of view implies that nature does not exist for our sake, but that it has to be shared on equal terms among all species. Following these sentiments, we do not have the right to kill a number of wolves just because they attack our sheep, or chop down an old forest to make furniture, or even dam a river to form a lake where we can water-ski. In *Hayduke Lives!*, we learn that by "direct citizen action" we can "preserve those living breathing respirating trees whose right to continued existence is at least as

legitimate as that of any other creature including, but not limited to, the human" (129). And because most of our encroachment does more harm than good, it is vital that we pay respect to all elements of nature and concede that we are only members and not masters in the ecosystem. This is in keeping with what Martin Lewis argues is the "primitivist," or eco-radical, "doctrine" which states that "if modern human beings are unique, it is only in their capacity for destruction" (Lewis 1992, 29). In Dave Foreman's opinion, it is humans who threaten, not only themselves, but the existence of all species. He claims that "we humans have become a disease - the Humanpox" (Foreman 1991, 57).

Further, the wilderness holds a value of tradition. The human species have lived on and in the wild for a much longer period than in civilization. Because of this fact, it is important to maintain the few wild areas left, in order to connect with our past. Reminding us of our natural past, Abbey states that: "We need wilderness because we are wild animals" (Abbey 1991, 229). He continues :

because men and women first learned to love in, under, and all around trees,
because we need for every pair of feet and legs about ten leagues of naked nature,
craggs to leap from, mountains to measure by, deserts to finally die in when the heart
fails. (229)

It is vital that this cultural heritage is maintained so that future generations will have the possibility of experiencing it. The wilderness has been the source of inspiration and creativity for man through all times. Without such a source "we will be reduced to making ever-fainter copies of copies," Roderick Nash points out (Nash 1994, 81). Therefore the Gang is ready to fight by all means, "[n]ot for the America that was - keep it like it was? - but for the America that will be" (Abbey 1990c, 274). The wilderness undergoes, in fact, a rapid deterioration from *The Monkey Wrench Gang* to *Hayduke Lives!*. In the first novel, "the country within their view was roadless, uninhabited, a wilderness," and "[t]hey meant to keep it that way" (Abbey 1992b, 68). However, only three years later,

they fight trying to *reverse* the deteriorating process by making the area “be like it was” (Abbey 1990c, 274). Among those who criticize radical environmentalists for wanting a counter-industrial revolution is Martin Lewis. According to him, “nature’s warriors... seek to destroy civilization in order to bring about a global return to hunting and gathering, the supposed state of human grace” (Lewis 1992, 29). Even though the Earth First!ers cry “ONWARD TO THE PLEISTOCENE,” such a reference is merely used to underline their wish to be part of a society free from destructive machinery.

The psychological value, of a maintained wilderness, is equally important. Hayduke’s anger is eased by the atmosphere he finds in the desert. And he is easily exhilarated by the wind “kiss[ing] his ear,” as well as by the colors of the canyon country (Abbey 1992b, 14). In his essay *Freedom and Wilderness*, Abbey states that one of the few things that makes living in the cities “tolerable, exiting, and stimulating is the existence of an alternative option... of a radically different mode of being *out there*, in the forests, on the lakes and rivers, in the deserts, up in the mountains” (Abbey 1991, 229). We need the challenges that are in the wilderness. It allows us to experience both feelings of freedom and danger which seem to have been lost through our modern lifestyle. Knowing that there is a sanctuary, and having the opportunity of going there whenever necessary, may in many cases be enough to keep people on their feet, and their souls and bodies united. As Hayduke states: “[T]his is something I’ve wanted to do all my life. I mean live on my own, out in the wilderness” (Abbey 1992b, 318). Therefore, the wilderness is needed to offer man “a plausible way of life,” as Doc Sarvis says (53). Because once the wilderness disappears, there will be no place to recover from the urban pace and the result may be that “the universe goes mad” (53).

The psychological value is closely linked with the spiritual value. In the novels, *Jack Burns* and *the Monkey Wrench Gang* make use of the wilderness as a place for contemplation and meditation. In addition, the wilderness reminds

one of "a silent cathedral" where people find the peace and quiet they need to restore themselves for living in the "civilized" world (Abbey 1992a, 232). This was also expressed by the American Transcendentalists headed by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who considered nature as the basis for a spiritual world. "There is something... in the desert, something that has no name" says Abbey hinting at its mystique (Abbey 1984, 154). In his view, the area offers "[a] kind of delight. God? Perhaps.... Grace? Possibly" which holds something that one "cannot explain or even name" (154). However, geographical names such as "Salvation Creek," "Jacob's Ladder," "Angel Arch," and "Devil's Pocket" do show a certain spiritual value associated with various wilderness areas (Abbey 1990a, 226-7). In their closer spiritual bond to the wilderness, Native Americans have always worshiped nature and considered it to be a sacred place. Accepting the wilderness as a minority's church gives nobody the right to behave irreverently in such sacred places. And as Abbey argues in *Desert Solitaire*: "We have agreed not to drive our automobiles into cathedrals... and other sanctums of our culture; we should treat our national parks with the same deference, for they, too, are holy places" (52). In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Hayduke and Seldom believe that it is their duty to help God have all the bridges removed, since He did not place bridges across the canyons in the first place. They know they are able to do their duty because, as Hayduke states, "God is on our side. Or vice versa (Abbey 1992b, 178). And in *Hayduke Lives!*, God's opinion is voiced during a hearing with the argument that if "God wanted us to mine uranium, why'd He hide it four hundred feet *under* the ground?" (Abbey 1990c, 18).

Abbey's background and deep interest in anarchism is shown explicitly in the novels. Supportive of the anarchistic ideology, the monkeywrenchers energetically subvert the authorities in word and deeds since "freedom, not safety, is the highest good," as Hayduke says (23). In his opinion, everybody needs the freedom to experience the world on one's own without being forced

to follow instructions, signs, and regulations. In order to fulfill this need, Hayduke suggests that there be "*no* favorites, no licenses, no goddamn rules for the road. Let every freeway be a free-for-all" (Abbey 1992b, 23).

To the Monkey Wrench Gang, it is important that the wilderness is protected for political reasons. If a major social and political conflict emerges with the possible result of a dictatorship, it will become necessary to fight these authorities by all means, because, as Doc Sarvis appropriately remarks: "it's going to get a lot worse, if we let *them* carry out their plans" (149). Any serious authoritarian conflict will very often involve the use of weapons. The fact is that the government would still have guns if these weapons were banned among the public. In such a state it would be almost impossible to fight the party in power. "Hate guns... In wrong hands," Seldom says (Abbey 1990c, 289). When necessary, a fight can be maneuvered from the wilderness, which Abbey states will remain "as a place of refuge, as a hideout, as a base from which to carry on guerrilla warfare against the totalitarianism..." (Abbey 1991, 231). Preserving the wilderness means that the governmental institutions will not have the ability to "suppress individual freedoms" (231). Nor will they be able to conduct surveillance in these wilderness areas in order to "preserve... the status quo" and their "privileged positions" (231). These thoughts are, however, not only Abbey's. Roderick Nash mentions in passing that Big Brother in Orwell's *1984* "made its first concern the elimination of wilderness" since it [Big Brother] "could not control thought in wild country" (Nash 1994, 80). This indicates the necessity of a constant rebellion against any hostile domination. Therefore, every wilderness area which is preserved becomes a victory over the authoritarian state and prevents the formation of a dictatorship. In Abbey's novels, anarchism and wilderness are fused together as they both embody the spirit of freedom. Therefore, "[t]he extreme of human freedom is anarchy," as Paul T. Bryant so appropriately remarks, "and the extreme of nature without human domination is wilderness" (Bryant 1989, 39).

The arguments above can, however, be summed up in the code that states that the eco-warrior does his/her "needed work out of love" against industrial terrorism (Abbey 1990c, 113). Taking responsibility for what they love, the Monkey Wrench Gang feel committed to "do something," simply "because somebody has to do it" (Abbey 1992b, 158). There are, of course, various ways to thwart destruction. But as Abbey argues in defense of his characters' ecotage activity: "They do this only when it appears that in certain cases and places all other means of defense of land and life have failed and that force - the final reason - becomes morally justified" and "a moral obligation" (Abbey 1993, 252-253). In any case, the overall point is to force the enemy "to withdraw and retreat from their invasion of public lands, our wilderness" (Abbey 1990c, 111). Many eco-warriors argue that they fight in self-defense, trying to save what is left of their "native and primordial home" (111). John Locke stated as early as in 1690 that "Man... hath by nature a power... to preserve his property - that is, his life, liberty, and estate - against the injuries and attempts of other men" (Partington 1992, 425:5). In the Forward [sic] of *Ecodefense*¹⁴ one finds a similar lucid argument in which Abbey states that:

If a stranger batters your door down with an axe, threatens your family and yourself with deadly weapons, and proceeds to loot your home of whatever he wants... the householder has both the right and the obligation to defend himself, his family, and his property by what ever means are necessary. (Foreman 1993, 3)

Considering the wilderness as one's true home, and experiencing an ongoing process where a precious area is being invaded and destroyed, surely makes one feel the need to defend it. Having nothing to lose, the Monkey Wrench Gang fight with an unyielding commitment to their cause. Because "if wilderness is outlawed, only outlaws can save wilderness" (Abbey 1990b, 85).

¹⁴ *Ecodefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* has been published due to the United States' freedom of the press. Just after its first publication in 1985, the U.S. government did what they could to stop further publication and distribution of the book, though without success. It has been, or may still be, banned in Australia. The third edition of *Ecodefense* is dedicated to Edward Abbey.

How They All Do It

Packs were opened, tools and flashlights brought out. While Doc stood watch above them his three comrades entertained themselves cutting up the wiring, fuel lines, control link rods and hydraulic hoses of the machine...
-*The Monkey Wrench Gang*

The nineteenth-century British worker Ned Ludd, who destroyed supposedly labor-saving machinery and to whom *The Monkey Wrench Gang* is dedicated, might have been the first monkeywrencher. Monkeywrenching accumulated in the early 70s with the increase in environmental awareness. Radical environmental activism and monkeywrenching spread all over the U.S. and in other parts of the world by individuals and small groups who engaged in the battle against billboards, dam projects, and local authorities.

In *Hayduke Lives!* we read that "The urge to destroy that which is evil, said the anarchist Prince Bakunin, is a creative urge"¹⁵ (278). This creative urge comes out strongly among the Monkey Wrench Gang. In order to do as much damage as possible, the party makes use of every kind of equipment they can acquire: syrups, caltrops, detonating cords, wirecutters, night-vision binoculars, and of course, monkey wrenches. Taking their enemy by surprise, they play out their maneuvers during the early hours since the engineers "would not and did not think of... [a] band of four idealists stretched out on their stomachs" ready to damage their property (Abbey 1992b, 66). After a number of trials and errors, the Gang members gain routine and reduce their working time to a couple of minutes. Their targets are, at first, any kind of unattended machinery. They destroy bulldozers by draining the oil, pouring sand into the crankcase, and cutting up the wiring. In addition, they pull up survey stakes and throw them away, forcing the engineers to survey and mark the road a second time. The Gang soon come to realize, however, that in order to improve their sabotage,

¹⁵ The actual quote by the Russian revolutionary and anarchist Michael Bakunin (1814-1876) is: "The urge for destruction is also a creative urge" (Partington, 1992, 47:22).

they have to be more sophisticated. "If you were serious about this wooden-shoe business," Hayduke says to himself, "you'd get a haircut, shave off the beard, take a shower, put on some clean work clothes and get... any kind of job, with the construction company itself. Then - bore from within..." (86). This becomes Hayduke's new specialty. He gets employed as a night watchman, a cleaning lady, and even as a computer expert, by using a new set of fake I.D.s. His scheme pays off as he works himself into various strategic areas and manages, successfully, to detonate bombs and fry computer circuits. "I'm the man with a dozen faces," he brags to Doc Sarvis, "[I]ast month I was Casper Goodwood. Month before -" (Abbey 1990c, 109). But as the monkeywrenchers develop their ecotage, their schedule becomes tougher. Before they know it, their weekly program involves "three bridges, a railroad, a strip mine, a power plant, two dams, a nuclear reactor, one computer data center, six highway projects and a BLM scenic overlook to take care of" (Abbey 1992b, 206-7).

The necessity of using forceful means has been discussed thoroughly by several would-be authorities as well as by environmentalists. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, the four team-mates frequently discuss and argue about the various procedures as the following passage shows:

The doctor reminded Hayduke that the use of explosives for illegal (however constructive) purposes was a felony, as well as being a Federal offense where bridges and highways were concerned, whereas simply pouring a little Karo syrup into the fuel tank and sand or emery powder into the oil intake of a dump truck was merely a harmless misdemeanor, hardly more than a Halloween prank.

It became a question of subtle, sophisticated harassment technique versus blatant and outrageous industrial sabotage. Hayduke favored the blatant, the outrageous. The others the other. Outvoted as usual, Hayduke fumed but consoled himself with the reflection that things would get thicker as operations proceeded. For every action a bigger reaction. (62)

Hayduke's reasoning is in fact substantiated. The four idealists start off in *The*

Monkey Wrench Gang pulling up survey stakes, but blinded by their eagerness, they turn to more forceful means as Hayduke starts calling for TNT, fertilizers, and plastique. Finally, by the end of *Hayduke Lives!* their ecotage has developed into crafty and well-planned raids where their attacks involve more violent methods, leaving behind them what started off as simple games. And even though their activities make them all (except Hayduke, of course) wonder whether they might have “gone far enough,” and that it might be “time to stop,” none of them dare to say it aloud (Abbey 1992b, 230). Instead, due to their persistent monkey wrench activity, they end up in a vicious circle where there is no escape. “We’re criminals now,” Bonnie says, “and we’ve got to start *acting* like criminals,” realizing that there is no return (137).

The eco-warrior’s main challenge is to successfully monkey wrench without getting caught. The Gang soon learn how to cover their tracks, leaving no trails for Bishop Love’s Search & Rescue Team or the FBI. Whenever they go shopping for more equipment, they pay in cash. “No credit cards,” Hayduke declares, “you want to leave a fucking documented trail one mile wide with your fucking signature on it everywhere we go?” (61). And since they quite familiar with area, they are able to find necessary hideouts. “You’d think we were chasing a ghost,” says Sheriff Johnson in *The Brave Cowboy* (Abbey 1992a, 244). Hayduke’s astonishing escapes when he, for instance, winches his jeep down an overhanging cliff or uses a dummy to stage his own death, are scenes that exemplify their understanding of rule number two in the monkey wrench business: “Don’t get caught” (Abbey 1990c, 110). The importance of escape is that a monkeywrencher who escapes the scene of the crime is able to return at any time to continue his/her mission.

In spite of the vigorous sabotage described in these novels, the sense of responsibility and enthusiasm for environmental matters have dwindled over the past years, and “nature” does not seem to be as fashionable as it used to be. While *The Monkey Wrench Gang* is a “why-for” and “how-to” guide giving

practical advice to monkeywrenchers, *Hayduke Lives!* poses fundamental questions about reluctant involvement in environmental issues. In *Hayduke Lives!*, we read that "There was a time men loved ideas; now they get by with slogans," which suggests a decline in people's environmental concern (81). The novel criticizes people of being too indifferent, and it is clear that it wants us to take a stand and it asks for our involvement in environmental matters.

There are, however, several ways to fight the "machine" apart from pulling up survey stakes, blowing up bulldozers and bridges. Many people who do not want to take part in the actual monkey wrench business, feel comfortable with contributing with tithes to various trustworthy environmental organizations, as do Bonnie and Doc. "We support the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society and Audubon and the NAACP and God only knows what else but we give ten percent, every year" she explains, and repeats "Ten percent" (105). Others make their views known by participating in public hearings, writing letters, and endorsing petitions to (ir)responsible Governors, commissioners, and industrial representatives. An underlying message in the novels is that these methods have their limits. The discussions and the public hearing in the early chapters of *Hayduke Lives!*, for example, have no effect as the result is already predetermined. Despite the public's involvement or the outcome of the debate, the nuclear industry is ready to build another plant. Too often, such hearings tend to split the public into two opposing factions. While they argue, the authorities plan their next scheme. "There is one thing worse than being defeated," says Seldom's third wife Susan, "and that's not making any fight at all" (234). However, reluctant to do more ecotage after the raids and the subsequent trial in *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Doc Sarvis explains why he "can't. I'm a married man now George, have a wife, a little boy, another child in the oven" (114). Seldom's excuse is that he has gone back to his watermelon ranch with Susan, although his real reason for not getting involved is "I'm afeerd of them nucular [sic] power people. They're something different" (122).

The trio's fear of the powerful authorities prevents them from resuming their earlier "pranks." Convinced that the enemy will grow stronger if it is attacked, Seldom argues that "if we don't fight it anymore why then maybe when it takes over it won't hurt us" (122). So they become "responsible environmentalists," attending public hearings, giving their vote to wilderness preservationists, supporting peaceful approaches such as political lobbying, contributing with donations and signing petitions. But *Hayduke Lives!* argues that even though peaceful approaches might save some wilderness areas, or postpone development projects, there is nothing as effective as environmental sabotage. Not even Smith's approach, which is praying to God with "malicious intent" for an earthquake to strike a dam or a bridge (Abbey 1992b, 56).

Doc Sarvis finally comes to realize that peaceful years have been wasted:

How many months, perhaps years have I wasted? he thought, besieging politicians, bureaucrats, and the *New York Times* with letters?... saving the world?... sitting through tedious public hearings? questioning smug affable evasive Senators at cocktail parties? contributing funds to doomed campaigns? (Abbey 1990c, 168)

Remembering how their ecotage activities led to immediate results, Doc understands that there is nothing as effective as sabotage, and that all his visions of "saving the world" have been Utopian. What becomes important is to, as the Earth First! slogan says, "think globally - act locally" (200). And Hayduke, with the help of the reincarnated cowboy Jack Burns, "acts locally" the whole time. Because, as he says, "if you don't attack it, it strip-mines the mountains, dams all the rivers, paves over the desert and puts you in jail anyway" (Abbey 1992b, 92). He sums it all up with the vulgar but appropriate: "Are we through with this fucking philosophizing?... Now let's get to work" (258).

Hayduke's ecotage motto is "Getting even is the best revenge. (The only revenge.)" (Abbey 1990c, 237). Part of the monkey wrench business is in fact using machines to destroy other machines, which is what happens in *The*

Monkey Wrench Gang. Creative Hayduke says:

if we let the wiring alone, let the fuel lines alone, so they can start the engines, then the sand and the Karo will really do some good. I mean they'll have a chance to do the work we want them to do: ruin the engines. (Abbey 1992b, 76-7)

Their tactics are to hit the enemy, corporate America, in its wallet where it hurts the most because "[m]oney is the name of the game, the one thing they care about" (Abbey 1990c, 131). In order to do this, the eco-warrior has to "increase *their* costs," and "nudge them toward net loss, bankruptcy..." (110-111).

Hayduke Lives! culminates with the Monkey Wrench Gang's hijacking of the monstrous GOLIATH. Bishop Love, who is the novel's arch-representative of the establishment, has the chance of rescuing his machine by shooting at the hijackers in the control cabin. But he hesitates, saying: "Well... hate to damage the equipment," and refuses to act since "one of them lights cost several thousand bucks" (264). The Gang, on the other hand, know exactly how much the machines are worth, which allows them to extort the authorities.

Many argue that civil disobedience is a much more sensible approach than monkeywrenching. Its non-violent and peaceful way of demonstrating invites people to take part in a road blockade or a tree sit. There is, however, a difference between civil disobedience and monkeywrenching. Through civil disobedience, one hopes to reform a society using nonviolent actions that appeal to, and are supported by the public. A protester will under no circumstances use any kind of verbal or physical violence toward any being, or cause damage to any property. The main difference between the two is whether property needs to be damaged or not. While the civil disobedients do not, the monkeywrench support damaging machinery and other kinds of property as a means to destroy the Machine. Wicked tongues have stated, which *Hayduke Lives!* also hints at, that civil disobedience is more useful to ease one's conscience than as a means of actually defending the wilderness. Whether

monkeywrenching can be called "violent," or not, is a matter of definition. Critics of ecotage claim that ecotage borders on, or even is the same as terrorism. Such accusations have been rejected by supporters of ecotage who maintain that monkey wrench activities are "nonviolent" since they are "never directed against human beings or other forms of life" (Foreman 1993, 9). This means that violent approaches are acceptable as long as no one humans or animals are in jeopardy. Accused of supporting the use of explosives and firearms, radical environmentalists claim that "dangerous tools are usually avoided" since they "invite grater scrutiny from law enforcement agencies, repression, and loss of public support" (10). Abbey has a clear-cut opinions to the distinction between terrorism and sabotage. "Terrorism" he says "means deadly violence - for a political and/or economic purpose - carried out against people and other living things" (Abbey 1993, 252). He draws parallels to the government persecuting their own people, to bulldozers tearing up an area of trees and plants. Wilderness can only be defended through sabotage which, says Abbey, is "an act of force or violence against material objects, machinery, in which life is not endangered" (Loeffler 1990, 5). Thus, the objective for a true monkeywrencher is to strike against machines and tools that are destroying all kinds of life without causing any injury to other people or to themselves. However, as Abbey's novels and actual ecotage activity show, violence has sometimes become necessary in order to defend the land. Accordingly, the only justified solution when all other means fail is monkeywrenching.

People who criticize monkeywrenchers often question their morality of breaking the law for ethical reasons. Thus, radical environmentalists are not only attacked by the government, industrial corporations, or the FBI, but are also criticized by mainstream environmentalists who consider ecotage too revolutionary and violent. Tree-spiking, for instance, has become a widespread ecotage activity. There has been, and still is, however, an extensive debate going on among environmentalists and critics on whether to consider tree

spiking an act of civil disobedience or part of the more violent ecotage.

Advocates of tree spiking argue that nailing eight-inch spikes into tree-trunks is regarded as simply “vaccinating the trees for protection against a possible chainsaw massacre,” and that they do no harm to either people or property (Abbey 1990c, 129). The critics, on the other hand, argue that the spikes will cause considerably damage once they get in contact with the chainsaws or the saw-mill blades. There have been incidents where mill operators have been killed by broken blades. However, as a consequence of this, some tree spikers have begun to mark the spiked trees or send anonymous tips to the logging companies.

Critics love to claim, as mentioned, that ecotage borders on terrorism and that its advocates encourage such violent activities. In *Hayduke Lives!*, Bernie Mushkin¹⁶ criticizes the group of Earth Firsters and the monkeywrenchers for

setting back the cause of justice, decency, ecology and environmentalism by at least fifty years in America.... Your well-publicized advocacy of sabotage and monkeywrenching has made Earth First! a synonym for terrorism. (202)

He attacks them for being “eco-fascist,” claiming that their campaigns are violent and anti-humanistic, and that their campaigns will only give the general environmental movement a bad reputation. Brought in for questioning by the FBI, young Oral Hatch is told that the environmental activists are “worse than terrorists,” since they “attack property. *Property, Oral*” (148). Editor of *Environmental Ethics*, Eugene Hargrove states that *The Monkey Wrench Gang* “is filled with paramilitary operations” which seem “closer to terrorism than civil disobedience” (Hargrove 1993, 251). He condemns the use of

¹⁶ Bernie Mushkin is modeled on the radical trade-union activist, humanist, and theorist Murray Bookchin (1921-). In a letter of reply, Bookchin argues that one of the key points for the ecology movement is to take part in community organizing by “creating a libertarian municipalist movement” (83). Bookchin believes that environmental problems can be worked out by letting “people meet face-to-face, identify their common problems, and solve them through mutual aid and volunteer community service” (82). This is of course in opposition to the message in Abbey’s novel *Hayduke Lives!*. The quotes in this footnote are from: Chase, Steve ed. 1991. *Defending the Earth: A Dialogue Between Murray Bookchin and Dave Foreman*. Boston: South End Press.

monkeywrenching as a tool for defending the wilderness since its “antihumanistic position” and violent elements do not extend “moral considerability” but rather give nature “priority” (251). In his opinion, such activity suggests terrorism rather than civil disobedience and only hurts the environmental movement as a whole.

The Gang is aware that their activities might be misunderstood. “They ain’t gonna understand us too good” Smith says; “we’re gonna be misunderstood.... Maybe we should explain” (Abbey 1992b, 74). However, explanations might not help because if one is involved one immediately places oneself in opposition to the authorities and law-enforcers. The problem that arises is that one creates and enters a world of *us* versus *them*. This means that it may be difficult to avoid mixing up people and cause, thereby attacking the ones who commit “evil” rather than the enemy itself. In such a state, it might be difficult to mobilize for the right cause as one’s focus is distracted from the real purpose of the fight.

According to Michael Martin, a philosopher from the University of Boston, advocates of ecotage have not yet managed to justify the use of monkeywrenching as opposed to civil disobedience. He argues that “although there are no general arguments standing in the way of such justification, the case of particular acts of ecosabotage has yet to be made” (Martin 1993, 257). Martin asks for evidence that can confirm that illegal means have proved to be more effective than legal methods. Because in order for a community to justify the moral goals and means of ecotage, such evidence has to surface. “To my knowledge,” he says “they [the ecosaboteurs] have not done so” (263). But, as both *The Monkey Wrench Gang* and *Hayduke Lives!* show, when it comes to acquiring results, nothing is as effective as monkeywrenching. Because what finally sets the giant GOLIATH out of the game is *not* the work of the Earth First!ers’ and their road blockade. Rather, it is the clever work of a small group of monkeywrenchers that saves Lost Eden Canyon from undergoing further destruction. Ecotage activity has been criticized for not being as effective as the

eco-warriors like to maintain. It is obvious that successful ecotage demands a certain effectiveness, and there are examples in the novels where the Gang's ecotage fail. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, for instance, a power plant that had its coal train blown up by the Monkey Wrench Gang was only "shut down for a few weeks" to Bonnie's great disappointment (Abbey 1992b, 173). However, these novels would probably not have inspired their readers to ecotage if it had proved to be ineffectual.

The use of weapons and explosives is highly controversial even among the most persistent environmentalists, and ecotage activities have raised questions as to how far one should go in defending the wilderness. One of the major problems for the Monkey Wrench Gang is whether to confine themselves to civil disobedience, or stick to the more radical approach of ecotage. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, this discussion is evident between the reflective Sarvis and the impulsive ex-Green Beret and Vietnam veteran George Washington Hayduke.

"All this violence," Doc said. "We are a law-abiding people."

"What's more American than violence?" Hayduke wanted to know. "Violence, it's as American as pizza pie." (146)

Trying to find an argument in favor of a more violent approach, Hayduke draws parallels to the American society where violence seems to be an everyday affair. And during the course of the novels, the Gang's strategic development shows that they have started fighting fire with fire. Hayduke's military background and his affection for guns result in the use of various firearms. Arguing that he needs it in case "them Search and Rescue fuckers start shooting," he carries a variety of rifles, .357 magnum revolvers, and carbines (112). "I'm naked as a baby without that gun" he explains to Seldom who has just deprived him of his weapon (112).

Even though the novels contain several incidents where weapons play a central part, miraculously, nobody gets hurt. It is not until the end of *Hayduke*

Lives! that the use of guns gets out of control. Ready to hijack the GOLIATH, Bonnie, who in *The Monkey Wrench Gang* did not even know how to hold a gun, now draws "forth, with both hands, a sleek elegant precision-tooled Uzi 9mm machine pistol... Israeli made and Israeli deployed" (Abbey 1990c, 274). This suggests that the Monkey Wrench Gang have contacts in other places who can help them get hold of weapons illegally¹⁷. As mentioned, old Burns is the one that ends up shooting and killing a man. "There are a few things worth killing for. Not many, but a few" says Abbey in an interview (Solheim 1989, 97). And it might just be that Abbey wants to stress this when he lets Burns become his first eco-murderer.

Although the Code of the Eco-Warrior argues that monkeywrenching is not aimed at people, but against "a runaway technology... that feeds... on all living things," such a war is better off fought with creative tactic and simple tools, than with the use of guns (Abbey 1990c, 114). In fact, in the three novels, the use of guns does not help the monkeywrenchers in furthering their cause.

Ecotage activists are liable to receive severe sentences if caught. Civil disobedients, on the other hand, normally get arrested, registered, fined, and released, which is what happens with the Earth First! demonstrators. Even though the authorities respond to all ecotage activity by threatening that "the perpetrators of these illegal acts, when caught, w[ill] be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," there are several groups of people who are "working" in the monkey wrench business (Abbey 1992b, 38). "Bonnie, you think we're alone?" Hayduke asks, suspecting others to be in the same business as they are (152). He goes on:

¹⁷ Hayduke says to Doc Sarvis that he "[w]rote a letter to Omar Kaddafi," and that he is waiting for an answer (Abbey 1990c, 115).

"All over the country, little bunches of guys in twos and threes, fighting back."
"You're talking about a well-organized national movement."
"No I'm not. No organization at all. None of us knowing anything about any other little bunch. That's why they can't stop us."
"Why don't we ever hear about it?"
"Because it's *suppressed*, that's why; they don't want the word to get around." (152)

Their strength lies in the fact that they are not organized in one group or movement, but operate in small scattered groups. In *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, there is press censorship as the local papers first "spoke of meaningless vandalism. Later, for a time, reports of such incidents were suppressed on the theory that publicity might only encourage the vandals" (37). This led to a general debate on this type of illegal activity as people started writing letters to their local papers. Abbey too, by writing these novels subverts the government's attempt to silence reported incidents of monkey wrench activity.

In the prologue of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* we witness the official opening, and the unofficial closing, of the Glen Canyon bridge. The sight is not described as dramatic as it may look although the bridge is blown up immediately after the cutting of the ribbon. Accompanied by "unprogrammed fireworks" the bridge falls into the abyss while "loose objects - gilded scissors, a monkey wrench, a couple of empty Cadillacs - slid[e] down the appalling gradient of the depressed roadway... turning slowly, into space" (5). The normally neutral language indicates that this activity is not *that* bad after all. In the world of the monkeywrenchers, however, the means become insignificant when the ultimate goal is to "save the fucking wilderness" (190).

Abbey has been criticized for writing about the limited canyon landscape area on the border between Northern Arizona and Southern Utah. More people are now aware of "his paradise" than would have been the case had he not written so evocatively about this geographical area. Now thousands go out there each year. It is a paradox that the land he wanted to defend against

intruders is now being damaged by hikers, bikers and campers, and many have wondered if Abbey sacrificed the Southwest for his own benefit as a writer. However, in Abbey's defense, without his focus on the Southwest, the region, as a wilderness area, would have been destroyed by industrial corporations much earlier. It is important not to become indifferent to matters concerning the environment. As long as there are developers, such as Bishop Love, it is important to take a stand. Hopefully it will be to the better for people as well. How one wants to involve oneself varies from person to person. These three novels clearly state what means should be used. However, not everybody can crawl on their bellies under a Caterpillar at night, and not everybody can pay a tithe every month to a trustworthy organization. Anyway, there is always "something to do," and Hayduke's suggestion is to: "Always pull up survey stakes... Anywhere you find them. Always. That's the first goddamned general order in the monkey wrench business. Always pull up survey stakes" (70).

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