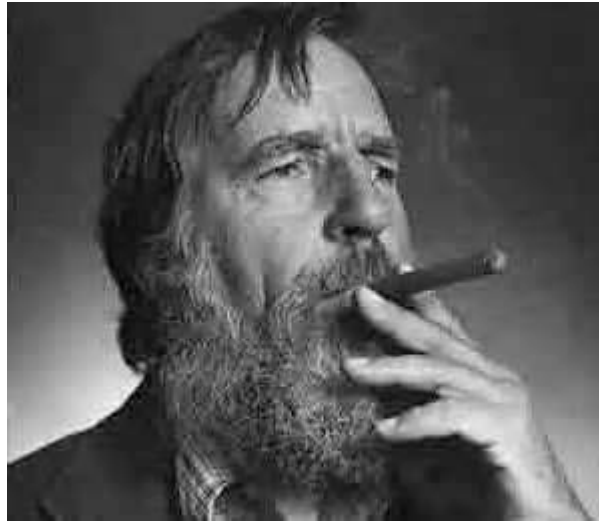


## ANALYSIS

*The Monkeywrench Gang* (1975)



Edward Abbey

(1927-89)

## INTRODUCTION

Edward Abbey is a polarizing figure remembered as the radical environmentalist who inspired the founding of eco-terrorist groups such as Earth First! (1980) and the Earth Liberation Front. He became a countercultural icon known as Cactus Ed. A pop song celebrated him, poems are still written for him, his manner of burial in the desert has become a legend and his unknown resting place an imagined shrine. His nature writing, in particular *Desert Solitaire* (1968), is a standard in academic courses on environmental studies. The Edward Abbey Foundation “considers Edward Abbey to be the father of Green Thinking. The foundation was formed in his honor...to award professors Edward Abbey Foundation endowments based upon their enviobiodynamic thinking.”

Abbey got famous for an anarchist adventure novel that became a manual for eco-terrorist sabotage, published in 1975 *after* major environmental laws had been passed by Congress (1970-73). As put on one of his fan websites: “The radical environmental movement resulted from the 1975 publication of *The Monkeywrench Gang*. Dave Foreman and several others were inspired by the message of the book and formed the group Earth First! with Abbey’s story in mind.” One edition of the novel is hyped in an introduction by movie star Robert Redford. In his “Eco-Defense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching,” Abbey advocates spiking trees to injure or kill loggers and millworkers: “Eco-defense is risky but sporting; unauthorized but fun; illegal but ethically imperative.... Spike those trees; you won’t hurt them; they’ll be grateful for the protection; and you may save the forest. Loggers hate nails.” This attitude initiated biocentrism as the philosophy--or religion--of the radical left wing in the environmental movement, with this logic: Trees are Good, therefore it is always Evil to cut them down. Hence loggers are Evil and it is the moral responsibility of biocentrics to cut *them* down to “save the Earth.” The term “monkeywrenching” has become the standard metaphor of eco-terrorism, used for example in an episode of *X-Files*, the popular television series about aliens.

## BIOGRAPHY

Details of his life contribute to the leftwing icon of Abbey: He was born the son of Paul Revere Abbey; his parents were Socialists; he resisted the draft during WWII; he served as a seasonal ranger at Arches

National Monument; his Masters thesis “Anarchism and the Morality of Violence” argued for revolutionary violence, citing Kropotkin and Bakunin. He called himself a barbarian. As such he denounced both left and right and all of human civilization. Abbey scorned convention yet he got married 5 times; he decried overpopulation yet fathered 5 children; he raged against defacement of the landscape yet threw his beer cans out the window of his vehicle; he attacks machines yet he obviously loves them; he is seen as a great liberal and yet: he opposed all gun control and Mexican immigration; he dislikes Indians; he defies feminist sensibilities; and he dreaded becoming a trendy figure among “campus liberals.” In his novel machines that “bugger” with an “agony of cylinder rings, jammed by a swollen piston, may be like other modes of sodomy a crime against nature...”

Whereas environmentalists see Abbey as a great inspirational Nature writer, his detractors see his prose as overbearing, verbose and redundant. Read only a few sentences and you will see that he is clearly an intelligent man, albeit in the nature of the Unibomber. He attended four universities including Edinburgh in Scotland and he studied with Wallace Stegner at Stanford. He is erudite. He has a large vocabulary including foreign phrases and has a wide knowledge of technical terms in various fields. At his best, he is a talented stylist, a flashy Postmodernist (the new barbarism?), excelling at varying his sentence rhythms for precise effects, at vivid descriptions, at rendering action and sometimes at evoking real life with authentic details. How good a writer is Abbey? According to his biographer James M. Calahan, “Abbey was a writer of the first rank, one of the most underrated in American literature.” Reviewing Calahan’s book in *The Bloomsbury Review* 22.3 (2002), James Hepworth laments that Abbey is not being recognized in anthologies as “the one American writer who has most fully promoted environmental justice” and he calls for some literary analysis of his work.

#### ANALYSIS

A crowd gathered for the ceremonial opening of a bridge between Utah and Arizona watches it blow up instead. The novel opens with the “aftermath” of its plot--an explosion that blows away suspense. Like Marxists, though he is an anarchist, Abbey uses his art as a weapon--a bludgeon. We know from the outset that the Gang succeeded, making them seem invincible, larger than life. They are eco heroes, avengers of the planet earth. That makes the narrative predictable and didactic. The focus becomes how to destroy things and get away with it. The state police are demonized on sight as “flunkies of the rich and powerful. Armed and dangerous.” Civilized norms are reversed, as police are seen as criminals and criminals as heroes. Throughout the novel, shots are taken at Christianity and Mormonism. Jesus is grouped with famous criminals: “Them people’l do anything for money... They’re Christians.”

An ordinary workman “scuttles” like a bug in a yellow hard hat “decorated with the emblematic decals of his class--American flag, skull and crossbones, the Iron Cross.” This equates the working class and all Americans with pirates and Nazis. Abbey demonizes people in groups without knowing them as individuals, saying of an oil company official with the initial J, “You can always tell a shithead by that initial.” A security guard pokes Bonnie “in the butt with two large stiff fingers...probably a Republican.” “And here was a helicopter pilot...probably from Vietnam... Why not kill the evil bastard?” Whole populations are condemned by category. To his superhero Hayduke, the Vietnamese are “little brown bastards” and “gooks.” There are no Asians or Blacks or Latinos or Indians in his gang, only white “idealists” pretending to be Indians, yet believing themselves superior to “the goddamned Indians.” The gang commits much of its sabotage against the Navajos and blames its crimes on them. “...they’re trying to make Christians out of the Indians. As if the Indians weren’t bad enough already.” Abbey is contemptuous of other races: “We’ll plant some watermelon seeds on old Martin Luther King’s grave.” Mexicans have “a grand and glorious history behind them”; “Far behind,” Bonnie said.

There is no aesthetic distance in this comic book novel. The narrator identifies completely with his male heroes and writes with the authoritative tone of an angry God. When the bridge blows up, the God voice of Abbey proclaims his enemy with a bellow in all capital letters—“AUTHORITY”! In one stroke of his verbal broadsword, Abbey beheads civilization. In attacking ALL authority, he claims to be the only authority on everything--the delusion of a megalomaniac. He is Captain Ahab inverted, attacking civilization and the human race with his fictional heroes as his avenging angels. The philosopher Thomas Hobbes described life in a state of Nature as “nasty, brutish and short.” From the outset, Abbey is nasty, brutish and short toward everyone except his four heroes. All people not anarchists are stereotyped as in

wartime propaganda that dehumanizes the enemy to make it easier to kill them. A buzzard hovers over the action in the aftermath, a conventional metaphor of death. Later a vulture is described as an “anarchist.” Like an Islamic terrorist, Abbey is prophesying the destruction of America, which he symbolizes as the eventual eco demolition of Glen Canyon Dam. Blowing up the bridge to the dam signifies “the loss of connections.” American literature affirms human bridges, Abbey wants to blow them up and return us all to the Stone Age, when the most barbarous men prevailed.

After introducing the four eco heroes, said to be modeled on real people, the novel is a redundant series of adventures celebrating their crimes. Dr. Sarvis is the “brains” of the gang, a member of “the Democratic County Committee” who funds their terrorism. His hobby is blowing up billboards until he decides to blow up the economy and goes after heavy equipment, bridges, trains and powerlines. “Explosives, of course, were tax write-offs.” Doc can be seen as a healer of the environment or as a Dr. Frankenstein, the creator of Hayduke, who “walks like a prefabricated man, Dr. Sarvis’s hand-made monster.” Doc is a hypocrit who owns mines yet condemns mining, a physician who wants to destroy medical science along with the rest of civilization and replace his profession with shamanism: “I don’t believe in majority rule... I am against all government, including good government.” That must include government according to the ethics of his profession. Doc prefers to govern, or not govern, himself by gratifying his instincts, both explosive and sexual: “I want to bugger a Baskin-Robbins girl.” As an anarchist, Doc feels entitled to rape.

Doc’s kick-ass feminist girlfriend (they like to wear flowers in their hair) is Ms. Bonnie Abzug—“No relation to the Senator... Her first name was Bonnie and she came from the Bronx, not Brooklyn.” Cactus Ed is the “brains” behind this novel and he got it wrong: Senator Abzug was born in the Bronx, went to high school in the Bronx and represented the Bronx and Manhattan in Congress--at the time Abbey was writing his novel! Bonnie is only half Jewish and Abbey differentiates between Jewish Brooklyn and the more gentile Bronx. He *assumed* that Senator Abzug came from Brooklyn because she was Jewish. What else did he assume about Jews? Abbey writes from assumptions and prejudices rather than doing research. And this is only his most glaring error.

Bonnie Abzug feels like wrecking things because she is “bored,” an apparent reference to the thesis of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Betty Friedan, said to have initiated the feminist movement of the late 20th century. Bonnie is an urbanite who performs the complete repertoire of feminist stock responses. She has no appreciation for the desert Abbey loves: “What utterly ghastly country.” Abbey sees feminists as comrades in destruction, but he has no respect for them: “Help Fem-Lib; Liberate A Woman Tonight”; “Hayduke faced the five other cowboys (and their heifers) at the table”; Bonnie is a terrible driver, submits to being what she calls a “flunky” taking orders from Doc and Hayduke, and in the end is domesticated and pregnant. Abbey calls Bonnie a “teenybopper intellectual...with an intelligence too fine to be violated by ideas” [the latter phrase is stolen from T. S. Eliot commenting on Henry James]. As a barbarian, Abbey thinks women should have the same rights they had in the Pleistocene. He said he intended his novel to be a “comic entertainment.” The only “comedy” is sexist humor at the expense of Senator Abzug.

Abbey merges sex with violence: Preparing an explosion, Hayduke calls his hot strands of ignition wire “fuckers” and the handle of his blaster a “fucker” as he instructs Bonnie on how to reach an anarchist orgasm. Reversing sex roles, Bonnie the feminist is to play the male: “push down hard, hard as you can—don’t be afraid to hurt the machine, you can’t hurt her, just go ahead and try to...send a current through the circuit and the juice sets off the caps.” At the climax, however, the feminist is not up for it and moans. Doc comes up behind her, wraps his hands over hers and, “forcing her to bend with and beneath him, he rams the plunger through radiant resistance coils hard and deep and true--all the way!--down to the cervix into the very womb of the cushioned box:

*Wham!* and- -

BLAM!

--he keeps it there...it always was his favorite position.

*Thank you, ma’am.*”

Abbey has insured that in all the erotic scenes, the feminist leader Senator Abzug will come to mind. His eco porn turns sex into a misogynous joke. He calls Hayduke an “anarchist voyeur” and evokes an orgy when Bonnie says, “We want to watch.” Likewise, Hayduke “felt potent as a pistol, dangerous as

dynamite, tough and mean and hard..." The opening scene of blowing the bridge is premature ejaculation that makes the subsequent climaxes foregone conclusions. Maybe this is why Abbey could not hold on to a wife. Each successive episode in his novel has the same pattern of foreplay leading to violence. Abbey is pandering to the lowest inclinations of his audience. His anarchist pornography of violent release renders each step of sabotage in minute detail over the same terrain like tedious close ups of genitals in sex porn.

Edward Abbey is a feminist nightmare, a charismatic misogynist guru seducing young people through the environmental movement, inspiring them to dominate women and regress to barbarism: "Hope springs eternal in the male gonad." Indeed, whereas in literature there are evocations of the human spirit, in *Monkeywrench* there are instead abundant references to bodily functions--the bowels, the sphincter, the scrotum, the female buttocks and the "joyprong." The sensibility expressed throughout the novel is puerile, crude, sub-literate and adolescent. Abbey relies on pissing for realism, as they do in Hollywood. In Thoreau there are many spiritual insights, in Abbey there are many erections.

The superhero of his gang who wins all shootouts, makes fools of the always stupid cops, appears to have supernatural powers enabling his miraculous escapes and turns the novel into a comic book, is George Washington Hayduke, a former Green Beret POW (piling up his patriotic credentials) during the Vietnam War, so patriotic he turned against his own people like Jane Fonda and decided to destroy our country using his expertise in demolitions, calling himself Rudolph the Red. Abbey stresses that Hayduke and the other barbarians are patriotic and love the true America, but in a state of Nature there would be no America. Abbey calls Hayduke, the character most like himself, a "philosopher and liar" who is "more destructive than bright." Hayduke is a "menace to other drivers but justified himself...because freedom, not safety, is the highest good." While condemning others for desecration of Nature, he pisses where he pleases and tosses beercans along roadsides and into the Colorado River. He loves Nature for "liberty, sex and free beer."

The fourth member of the gang is Seldom Seen Smith, so named because he is a Mormon with three wives. Abbey outdid him by two, but one after the other. Seldom Seen is Abbey himself as a husband. Smith is a boatman and river guide who lost business when Glen Canyon Dam plugged the Colorado River. Though depicted as pastoral, he is a guide who dreams of blowing up the dam. He is just as unfaithful to his three wives, lusting after Bonnie, as he is to his country: "She's the only thing makes this here goldang Communist foolery worth a grown-up man's time." Seldom Seen is likewise aptly named in reference to the common sense of Abbey.

The gang is a projection of Abbey's vision of himself: Doc is his educated head in the role of wise man and prophet; Bonnie is his anima complement in a subordinate role as sex object and breeder; Seldom is his pastoral heart, a river cowboy going with the flow of his feelings through the heart of the desert he loves; and the wild instinctual Hayduke is his anarchistic basic nature--a projection of his lust for righteous violence and his adolescent longing to be seen as a romantic hero and to get a lot of sex. Hayduke is by far the star of the gang and gets to enjoy Bonnie with no strings attached. As a superhero, he gets away with everything. All these embodied aspects of Abbey are disposed to violence as righteous good fun. This is because the gang, though funded by Doc, is led by Hayduke. Likewise Cactus Ed is not led by his head--reason and common sense--he is driven by his instincts, rages and prejudices, the part of him that is "more destructive than bright."

Abbey's fantasy of Utopian barbarism is evoked by Seldom Seen: "Before farming was invented we was all hunters or stockmen. We lived in the open, and every man had at least ten square miles all his own. Then they went and invented agriculture and the human race took a big step backwards. From hunters and ranches down to farmers, that was one hell of a Fall." Reality check: Prehistoric hunters were not lone rangers, they hunted in bands, for self-defense and to be more effective at trapping animals like elk and at bringing down big animals like mastodons. Lone rangers were seldom seen, "...even Hayduke sensed, when he faced the thing directly, that the total loner would go insane. Was insane." He indulges a reactionary fantasy of tribalism, when "free men and wild women on horses, free women and wild men, can roam the sagebrush canyonlands in freedom--god dammit!--herding the feral cattle into box canyons, and gorge on bloody meat and bleeding fucking organs and dance all night to the music of fiddles! banjos! steel guitars! by the light of a reborn moon." This is so unreal, the image of a wild woman that comes to mind is Senator

Abzug. The actual conditions of life in this region before civilization are dramatized by Cormac McCarthy in *Blood Meridian* (1985), based on a true account of ghastly atrocities by renegade whites and Apaches in the Southwest. Abbey seems to be unfamiliar with any history before Woodstock.

For a barbarian, Abbey often has an artificial prose style: "Their squalling kids fight in the back seats, Frigid Queen ice cream drooling down chins and elbows, pooling Jackson Pollack schmierkunst on the monovalent radicals of the Vinylite seat covers." He portrays the kids as disgusting, yet they are fellow barbarians, behaving less destructively than the adults he idealizes. Most readers would have to look up at least three words in that sentence--one of them in a German dictionary--plus Pollack, bringing the literary experience to a halt for some time. Abbey also frequently interrupts the flow of narrative with literal-minded catalogues and parentheses naming things, as if copying entries from parts manuals and Peterson's *Guide to Western Birds*: "...three comrades entertained themselves cutting up the wiring, fuel lines, control link rods and hydraulic hoses of the machine, a beautiful new 27-ton tandem-drummed yellow Hyster C-450A, Caterpillar 330 HP diesel engine, sheepsfoot rollers, manufacturer's suggested retail price only \$29,500 FOB Saginaw, Michigan."

Abbey is a Postmodernist, contrary to the aesthetics traditional in American fiction since Realism and Modernism, in (1) calling attention to himself and his erudition to the detriment of his narrative; and (2) in evoking a vertical left-brained consciousness that disrupts the right-brained literary experience, which depends upon sustaining an illusion of real life beyond the head of the author and has the potential to induce a vicarious transcendent experience of Nature. Abbey is a poor Nature writer because he imposes himself on Nature with language and beer cans just as civilization imposes itself on the landscape. His reference to the chemistry of the seat covers seems intended to emphasize the artifice of civilized life in contrast to the natural, yet his own style here on the first page of his novel is just as artificial as the seat covers. His diction is pretentious. A plain style would be more authentic for an advocate of Nature, a style more like that of American Indian chiefs, Black Elk, or Willa Cather. Style is the writer. Abbey is displaying by his flashy style, showing off his vocabulary and virtuosity, that he himself has been corrupted by the posturing and artifice prevailing in Postmodern culture.

For realism, in addition to many references to pissing and erections, Abbey relies on catalogues that are not figurative like those of Walt Whitman in "Song of Myself," expressing a mystical loving embrace of humanity, they are dead rhetoric--literal catalogues of material things and of placenames listed as if directly from a roadmap. Unlike Whitman's catalogues, expanding consciousness, most of Abbey's catalogues reduce consciousness to specifics pertinent to sabotage: "I'll need jumars, stirrup ladders, hex nuts, pitons, cliff hangers, hammer, star drill and expansion bolts." A complete shopping list of supplies for terrorists is given on page 67 of the Avon paperback. Acting as a how-to-do-it manual sabotages the art of the novel. Lengthy step-by-step directions on how to blow something up are irrelevant and tedious distractions to a literary reader (pages 177,182,235). Willa Cather: "There is a popular superstition that 'realism' asserts itself in the cataloguing of a great number of material objects, in explaining mechanical processes, the methods of operating manufactories and trades, and in minutely and unsparingly describing physical sensations. But is not realism, more than it is anything else, an attitude of mind on the part of the writer...?" *Willa Cather on Writing* (Knopf 1949).

Abbey is also artless otherwise: he resorts to vague and ineffective Expressionism at the end of his first chapter; most of his chapters end weakly, without clear point or punch, as if he spent himself on explosions; most of his dialogue has no literary dimension; his pop culture frame of reference is shallow; his similes and metaphors are descriptive and convey sensation rather than insight; and his writing is often trite, especially the erotic scenes: "Now kiss me, you ugly bastard." He does not dramatize key events: He merely tells about the experiences in Vietnam that turned Hayduke into a traitor. For a dramatization of comparable disillusionment written by Tim O'Brien the same year, see "Landing Zone Bravo" in *Going After Cacciato* (1979). Abbey also fails to dramatize Hayduke's most superheroic escape, making it even less convincing. "*Deus ex machina*," Bonnie said. Cop out, says the reader.

After the first four chapters, except for occasional figurative language the style is comparable to that of generic pulp fiction, but less exciting because there is no suspense, no dramatic tension since we know that Hayduke is always going to win. The narrative is so predictable that even when Hayduke appears to get

shot to pieces like Bonnie and Clyde, the reader is unlikely to believe it because Eco Man can never die. The novel ends near Mesa Verde, the Anasazi ruins that inspired Willa Cather to write one of the most transcendent works of American literature, "Tom Outland's Story," the center of her Modernist masterpiece *The Professor's House* (1925). Abbey either did not know the greatest novelist of the American West or he foolishly invited comparison. The best writing on the Southwest is in the story of Outland and in Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). No part of *The Monkeywrench Gang* can be set alongside Cather or the nature writing of Thoreau, Annie Dillard and Wallace Stegner without abandoning aesthetic and moral standards.

Abbey dedicates his novel to the memory of Ned Lud, who became an icon of anarchism because he sabotaged some machinery in the 18th century. However, Lud was protesting automation, not trying to destroy civilization. Abbey's opening quotations from Whitman and Thoreau also are misleading: Whitman said, "Resist much. Obey little." He did not say, obey nothing and destroy civilization. In fact, Whitman's "Song of Myself" celebrates the expansion of civilization, democracy and America. Whitman loved America, Abbey hates it. Thoreau said, "Now. Or never." He did not say blow things up for fun, he said resist passively. He did not mock religion, fetishize machines, degrade women, disparage other races, demonize people or throw beer cans into Walden Pond.

"Hell," Smith said... "Any road I wasn't consulted about that I don't like, I litter. It's my religion."  
"Right," Hayduke said. "Litter the shit out of them."

This is "environmental justice"? Despite his hypocrisy, Abbey was an influential propagandist in promoting simplistic politically correct stock responses to complex environmental issues with innuendo based on shared prejudices: "Are you aware of what the big logging companies are doing to our national forests? Of what the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation are doing to our streams and rivers? The rangers and game managers to our wildlife? Do you realize what the land developers are doing to what's left of our open spaces?" Anyone flying over North America can see the immense unpopulated open spaces on this continent. People are crowded into the cities. Abbey falsifies in his reference to "game managers," implying that all wildlife is game, subject to being hunted to extinction. As of 1973, two years before, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife agency and the Forest Service had been managing all life on government forestland as mandated by the Endangered Species Act.

Abbey purports to represent the entire diverse American logging industry by the example of one clear-cut. As if exposing some dastardly plot, he complains that the "real" business of the national forest is "timber farms" for industry. Industry is a dirty word in the eco religion. In truth "mixed use" has been the law in the national forests since they were established: both for preservation and to supply timber and support local economies--for schools, libraries, roads, fire protection and so on. Abbey lies in claiming there is no return value to taxpayers: "The Forest Service takes the money, our money, and spends it building new logging roads like this one...for loggers [to] run their timber-hauling rigs...to see how many deer, tourists and chipmunks they can kill." He says, "Let them build their houses out of rock," as if most people were rich.

His father was a logger, yet Abbey has no knowledge of forestry and writes about forests like a child. Longing for the good old days of barbarism, he wants to "keep it like it was." He does not know how it was. He naively imagines that forests are stable rather than always in flux. He does not know that Indians burned forestlands extensively and regularly. He does not know that there is more forest in North America today than when Europeans came because the white settlers stopped the Indians from burning forestland, suppressed wildfires and planted billions of trees. Abbey describes a clear-cut as "devastation." He emotes as though he does not know that trees grow back. Then he describes replanting and complains about aesthetics. As if there were not millions upon millions of acres of untouchable forested wilderness for him to enjoy. Did he also wallow in paroxysm of empathetic agony at the sight of a harvested wheat field? Abbey hated farmers and loggers and contractors and everyone who is productive. He hated men who take responsibility as providers for their wives and children by working for a living.

Abbey's knowledge of Nature in the form of forestry goes no deeper than his personal taste. He does not care that many regulations govern forest practices, that clear-cuts help prevent the most devastating

wildfires from spreading by serving as firebreaks, that wildfires have gotten much worse since the forests got overcrowded because people like Abbey have prevented thinning by logging, that Douglas fir grows back faster in a clear-cut than otherwise, or that the big timber companies have been growing crops of trees on their lands through many rotations for almost a century without depleting the soil. Nor does he mention that by opening the forest canopy, clear-cuts increase the diversity of wildlife, enlarging herds of deer and elk. (Today cuts in national forests leave about 15% of the trees.)

Another of Abbey's main complaints is against strip mining, in particular at Black Mesa, Arizona. The Peabody Coal Company leased the land on the mesa from the Navajo and Hopi tribes in 1968. The company spent 17 years documenting archaeological remains in the area, as required by federal law. Indians are suffering more than any other ethnic group in America, especially from unemployment. About 850 Native Americans are employed in the two mines on the mesa, most Navajos. Abbey wants to take away their jobs, which will increase alcoholism, domestic abuse and suicide on the reservations. He claims to be wiser than the tribes about how to manage their land and sides with a minority who consider the mining to be a desecration of a sacred place. At the same time he sneers at "our noble red brethren" for adapting to modern life by approving of the mine and for driving pickups like his own. He complains that "prime grazing land for sheep and cattle had been eviscerated already...inverted soil never again to nourish the roots of grass, bush or tree." Never again? In actual fact, reclamation on Black Mesa has transformed a large portion of the land from pinyon juniper in vegetation to grassland, which is good for wildlife dependent on open spaces in this region, because fire suppression has caused extensive replacement of grassland by forests and brush, according to numerous ecological studies across the Southwest.

Hayduke gets caught once, in the act of sabotage. A mysterious stranger gets the drop on him but turns out to be an eco superhero himself, even more super than Hayduke. He has the dialect of an uneducated man but he is smarter, cooler, more experienced and more capable at destroying things. He refers to other superheroes who are destroying property in the region, part of a now spreading movement to end civilization. He is blind in one eye (apt for an Atheist), rides away on a horse and is a "masked man." At the end of the chapter Hayduke asks Bonnie, "What is the difference between the Lone Ranger and God?" He answers himself, "There really is a Lone Ranger."

At the end of the novel, years after Hayduke disappears and the rest of the gang has done time, the masked man returns, "mounted on a horse that must be seventeen hands high." Hayduke, the new and improved Indian, has become a Tonto to the eco Lone Ranger! With a tone of adolescent romanticism typical of comic books, Abbey identifies his eco superduper hero not with a real person, but with another fiction--reversing the historical character of the Lone Ranger and perverting him into a half-blind destroyer who displaces God. Abbey is so Postmodernist he deconstructs himself: He has already declared that a total loner is "insane." Hence he has already implied that his eco Lone Ranger and his cause are insane. The symbolism of being half-blind only emphasizes the fact. It is just as revealing that "Eden" for Hayduke is solitude in the most barren part of the desert.

When he wrote his Masters thesis, Abbey knew he was advocating violence. In *Monkeywrench*, the whole gang is aware that their violence could hurt people and they say so frequently. It is only by Abbey's contrivance that no one is killed: Many of the machines they sabotage could injure operators, Hayduke has shootouts, he destroys a train with 80 cars that almost takes a man down with them, and so on. Yet in his "Eco Defense," Abbey claims that monkeywrenching is "non-violent." His mindless fans, including many professors, agree that blowing things up is not violent. The Ecology Hall of Fame praises Abbey and, "All those who espouse non-violent protests in the tradition of Ghandi." On the contrary, spiking trees alone has seriously injured innocent mill workers. Abbey calls these cowardly attacks "sporting" and "fun." At the same time he claims that "Care is always taken to minimize any possible threat to people." Yet his goal, blowing up Glen Canyon Dam, would produce a mega tsunami--a flood wave over 200 feet higher than Hoover Dam, drowning many people and animals.

The legacy of Edward Abbey is crime: Eco terrorist organizations he inspired have done many millions of dollars in property damage, especially in the West, including arson against houses under construction. They have cost taxpayers millions more in law enforcement. Eco terrorism has widespread support among environmentalists, particularly in the Northwest, where there are large enclaves of anarchists in Seattle,

Portland and Eugene. Earth First! and ELF have been guerillas on the front in a war against the timber industry and the working poor, closing forests and mills, putting thousands out of work and breaking up families. Oregon now has the highest number of homeless people of any state, the second highest rate of unemployment and the third highest rate of hunger. Eco terrorists have been supported, funded and reinforced in the courts by wealthy environmentalists, most notably the Sierra Club, the most influential such organization in the country. Members of the Sierra Club recently elected eco terrorist Tom Watson to their board of directors, a tree spiker who said of the attack on 9/11, "There is nothing wrong with being a terrorist, as long as you win." Watson announced his plan to take over the Club and its annual budget of almost one hundred million dollars. In his novel *Abbey* refers to the Club several times and Hayduke drinks coffee from a Sierra Club cup.

Academic environmentalists and others have had the evidence before them at least since *Monkeywrench* was published in 1975. They have overlooked or disregarded Abbey's limitations as a writer and as a human being apparently because of their ideology. Abbey is the worst writer ever proposed for canonization. His cult status is evidence that environmentalism has become a secular religion, a naive resurgence of pantheism, because its true believers:

1. Accept dogmas on faith as absolute truth
2. Refuse to consider evidence to the contrary
3. Are so hostile to dissenters they want them silenced
4. Idealize nonexistent static wilderness as earthly Heaven
5. See clear-cuts as Hell and loggers as demons
6. See eco terrorists who get caught as martyrs and Abbey as a saint

A fan of Abbey got kicked off a United Airlines flight because he purchased his ticket on 9/11 and carried a copy of *Hayduke Lives!* with a picture on the cover of a man holding sticks of dynamite banded together with a clock taped to the side. Had he remained on the faculty at the University of Arizona, Abbey might have become infamous like Ward Churchill at the University of Colorado, who likewise pretended to be an Indian and who called the victims in the Twin Towers "little Eichmanns."

The blurbs for *Monkeywrench* reflect the decadence of liberals and their Postmodern culture, calling the book a "thing of beauty," "infinitely wise," "flawlessly constructed." "One of the best writers to deal with the American West," according to the *Washington Post*. "It'll make you want to go out and blow up a dam," enthuses *The National Observer*. What fun. The status of Edward Abbey, especially in the environmental studies programs of higher education, is evidence that the politically correct culture is corrupt--devoid of literary and moral discrimination. Like the anarchists in the streets and forests, academic eco critics are venerating a sociopath.

#### POSTMODERNIST CHARACTERISTICS

1. Anarchistic individualism
2. Hostility to mainstream America
3. Rejection of tradition
4. Single point of view rather than multiple
5. Inversion of Modernist aesthetics
6. Assimilation of popular culture
7. Adolescent tone
8. Style over substance
9. On the margins rather than centered
10. Fantasy rather than realism
11. Materialism rather than transcendence
12. Orientation to body rather than soul
13. Sexual liberation and indulgence
14. Fun at the expense of others
15. Overt political stance
16. Righteousness rather than questing



## 17. Totalitarian sentiments

Michael Hollister (2012)

The Monkey Wrench Gang is a work of fiction written by Edward Abbey and published in 1975. The novel is centered around a motley cast of characters who come together coincidentally, and discover that they all share a common hatred for the destruction of nature in the American West. They see the blighting as coming from industry and human manipulation of the environment and they embark on a quest to halt the spread of destruction through violence, directed at machinery and buildings. This novel touches on two major themes that we have. Read this essay on Monkey Wrench Gang. Come browse our large digital warehouse of free sample essays. Get the knowledge you need in order to pass your classes and more. Only at TermPaperWarehouse.com. Big business and machine Edward Abbey's 1975 novel The Monkey Wrench Gang presents four lawless protagonists' eco-sabotage against overdevelopment carried by big business corporations. Abbey introduces necessary consequence of the corporations and capitalism on nature, showing that the damage they cause is higher than the benefits they produce.