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What Is Called Ecoterrorism¹

Lawrence Buell

The perceived threat of ecological terrorism has become a major concern of environmental discourse during the past two decades and ominously shifted focus in the process. This neologism has been brandished as an epithet both from the “right,” in the first instance to stigmatize eco- and animal rights activism, and from the “left,” to stigmatize state and corporate-sponsored violence. The activists quickly lost this war of words, however, so that “ecoterrorism” discourse has become predominantly a rhetorical weapon not only against radicals but sometimes even mainstream reformist initiatives. Through the lens of literary history, the shift is encapsulated by the genesis and reception of two novels: Edward Abbey’s cult classic *The Monkey-Wrench Gang* (1975), a catalytic inspiration for the Earth First! Movement but later a poster-child for right-wing critics of “ecoterrorism”; and Michael Crichton’s eco-thriller *State of Fear* (2004), in which an eco-radical organization figures as a satanic adversary secretly deployed by a supposedly respectable mainstream environmental group. It might seem that 9/11 would have played a crucial role in putting what one political theorist has called “resistance citizenship” on the defensive. But that is less true than one might suppose from the claims usually made for 9/11’s world-historical import. In this case, the “zero hypothesis” rejected by Jean Baudrillard (9/11 made no appreciable difference in the world power structure) seems broadly true. The deeper cultural logic of this irony is then explored, with reference to the long tradition of conspiracy phobia in U.S. history, as well as the political thought of Hannah Arendt, Jacques Derrida, and others. I then return to the question of how radical ecotheory’s ethical paradigms might abet overreaction rejected by Baudrillard and conclude with some reflections on the possible future(s) of eco-resistance citizenship.

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Environmental movements today face at least two major threats in the “age of terror” that the present era has widely declared to be since 11 September 2001. The more obvious of these is the literal threat of environmental disasters produced by the cycle of violent acts, retaliation, reprisal, etc. The other threat is pre-emption by allegedly greater crises and/or stigmatization of alleged subversiveness through manipulation of age-of-terror anxiety. This second topic is this essay’s concern: the threat to what British political theorist John Barry calls “resistance citizenship,” a concept he himself glosses as “nonviolent direct action” (*i.e.* civil disobedience tactics), but that arguably requires stretching given the recent interpretations from both the left and the right as to what such action might mean to include both more moderate and more militant expressions of environmental concern (34). In what follows, I hope and trust that the inevitable parochialism of my primary focus on the recent history of my own country, the United States, will be pardoned given that the U.S. has been the chief epicenter and promoter of age-of-terror anxiety worldwide.

Much of the story-line underlying this analysis can be encapsulated by comparing the discrepant tenor and reception history of two fictional texts: two novels published thirty years apart. The earlier is Edward Abbey’s *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), a raffishly sympathetic treatment of eco-sabotage by four colorful characters who sortie around the “Four Corners” area of the southwest—the point where the borders of the states of Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico meet—disrupting hydropower, logging, and construction projects. This book, environmental historians and ecocritics such as Martha Lee (65) agree, helped catalyze the early and most radical phase of the Earth First! movement, soon thereafter targeted as the first paradigmatic American ecoterrorist group by the counter-thrust emerging from the so-called Sagebrush Rebellion of the Reagan years. Abbey in fact had meanwhile proceeded to write the preface to founder Dave Foreman’s how-to-do-it manual, *Ecodefense* (1985) and to make charismatic appearances at Earth First! Rallies. But *Monkey Wrench Gang* was by far his most influential contribution to grassroots environmentalism both within the movement and beyond. As such, it is one of a very few texts in U.S. literary history to have exerted a demonstrable “real-world” environmental impact, whatever one thinks about that impact, or about the relevance of an impact yardstick to judgments of artistic merit. Other such texts include Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), an earnest, vehement exposé of chemical pesticides by an award-winning nature writer that is generally credited with a major influence in galvanizing environmental

reform legislation during the John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard Nixon eras; Upton Sinclair's "muck-raking" novel *The Jungle* (1906), whose horrific dramatization of the Chicago meatpacking industry prompted the U.S. Congress to enact milestone consumer safety legislation; and *Walden; or Life in the Woods* (1854), by Henry David Thoreau, one of Abbey's own literary heroes, an autobiographical account of the author's two years of voluntary subsistence living that has become a bible for modern environmental protectionists.

My second novelistic benchmark is the 2004 ecothriller *State of Fear*, by best-selling science fiction writer Michael Crichton, also a man of science, at least by training: a physician, Harvard Medical School graduate, and a one-time member of Harvard's Board of Overseers. *State of Fear* quickly became notorious among environmentalists for its debunking of concerns about anthropogenic global warming as alarmism based on bad science, for which Crichton was lionized by President George W. Bush.² Especially significant for present purposes is that its plot turns on a conspiracy among environmentalists to create a series of massive-scale high-tech-induced disasters around the globe involving a secret deal between a fictitious ostensibly mainstream big-green organization called the National Environmental Resource Fund (NERF), and the Earth Liberation Front (ELF), an actual underground radical-action movement that broke from the U.K.'s branch of Earth First! in the early 1990s. The goal is to drum up support for NERF's campaign against global warming by creating extreme weather events. The conspiracy is foiled by a superintelligent Indiana-Jones-like M.I.T. professor (who also happens to be an undercover agent of indeterminate portfolio), who repeatedly preaches the lesson underscored in the authorial afterword about the extreme danger of politicizing scientific research.

At least three differentials mark *State of Fear* as a contemporary age of terror text vs. *Monkey Wrench Gang* as the relic of a former era in addition to the topical shift from a save-the-wilderness-first conception of environmentalism's top priority to a view of climate change as the

2. See for example Masters' review at (www.wunderground.com). Michael Crichton's premise of a NERF-ELF alliance looks especially suspicious in light of the history of mainstream environmental organizations like the National Wildlife Federation's convergence with anti-environmentalist groups in stigmatizing Earth First! and its more radical successors as ecoterrorists (DeLuca 115-16), precisely in order to counter anti-environmentalist conflation of the environmentalist mainstream with the eco-militant fringe.

environmentalism's most pressing concern: first, the expansion of the scale of imagined eco-resistance from regional to planetary, giving it the fearsome look of a pan-global threat; second, the lumping of mainstream environmentalism together with the ultra-militant fringe, and thereby overriding a distinction crucial to both Abbey and Earth First!'s whole *raison d'être*, (and the breakaway ELF's *raison d'être* as well); and third, the attendant reduction of environmentalist resistance of whatever sort to the threat of untrammelled violence against humanity.

In order to grasp what happened in between, one needs to come to terms with the rhetorical war over what has been seen to count as "ecoterrorism" or "ecological terrorism," ever since these terms were first put in circulation. Here we glimpse the back story of how the U.S. and the settler colonies of the Anglophone world more generally tend as a matter of course to talk about the threat of so-called environmental terrorism now.

The epithet "ecoterrorism" and its cognates form a cluster of related neologisms of quite recent date, probably two decades at most, coined it would seem almost simultaneously from the right—in order to stigmatize radical activists—and from the left, in order to stigmatize authoritarian state and corporate mistreatment of environment and/or animals.³ So, for example, Paul Watson, founder of the Sea Shepherd movement, accused of ecoterrorism for destroying fishnets and ramming illegal whaling vessels, retorts that ecoterrorism rightly denotes a "terrorizing of the environment and living things" "usually carried out by corporations," as for example in the case of the Exxon *Valdez's* huge oil spill off Prince William Sound in Alaska in 1990 and the Union Carbide plant's catastrophic 1986 explosion in Bhopal ("Interview").

This war of words continues, but the crucial point to make here is how one-sided it became so quickly, even though Watson, in the 2003 interview just cited, takes no notice of the fact. When I started researching the history of ecoterror rhetoric, I was certain that 9/11/2001 would prove to figure as a watershed of major import. Not so. So far as this topic is concerned, one is forced toward precisely what cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard—with an uncharacteristic shudder of pious shock and revulsion against the very idea—dismissively rejects as the "zero hypothesis" as to the significance of 9/11: namely, that 9/11 was but one of a series of incidents "on the path of irreversible globalization" (51).

3. *OED* (online) cites Alvin Toffler on eco-radicalism (1990) and *Time* on Saddam Hussein (1991) as its first examples (<http://dictionary.oed.com.ezp2>).

To be sure, 9/11 *did* raise the public eco-paranoia level, all across the political spectrum—most immediately, for obvious reasons, in the United States. It increased the likelihood of cases like the harassment under the swiftly-enacted Patriot Act by the U.S. government’s domestic surveillance organization, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), of an apparently innocent resident of a small town by the Mississippi River for imprudently declaring at a local meeting that the Army Corps of Engineers should dynamite a nearby dam rather than construct a special bypass channel for fish (Dean A15).⁴ It made for swaggering on the national scene by such right-wing politicians as Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, who as chair of the Committee on Environment and Public Works before the transfer of power to the Democratic party after the election of 2006, pressed for tightened F.B.I. oversight over earth and animal liberationists, whom he went so far as to call “the number 1 domestic terror concern, [more so than] white supremacists, militias, or anti-abortion groups” (18 May 2005 statement). That was an extraordinary statement indeed for a politician from the state whose capital city had been, not long before, the site of by far the most horrific act of (*far-right*) terrorism ever carried out by an American citizen.⁵

Yet it is no less clear that left-green efforts to distinguish between carefully targeted sabotage and terrorism proper and to turn the ecoterrorist label against state and corporate violence against environment failed miserably before 9/11; and furthermore that this happened despite repeated insistence on the left that ecomilitants sought to target property and *not* people, and consensus on both sides—including even Senator Inhofe—that no human death had yet resulted from such activity, at least in the United States.

For a decade or more, the F.B.I. has defined terrorism generally and ecoterrorism specifically in sweeping terms, to encompass “the use or threa-tened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally-oriented sub-national group for

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4. On the other hand, the F.B.I. failed to prevent wrongful harassment damages being awarded to environmentalists Darryl Cheney and (posthumously) Judi Bari on the ground that their investigation of the early 90s was “similar” to post-9/11 investigations (Helvarg 251).
 5. The most vocal spokesperson within American academe for environmental and animal rights militancy, Stephen Best (North Texas State University), went to the opposite extreme in naming Inhofe the “top terrorist threat on the planet” (“Senator James Inhofe: Top Terrorist Threat to Planet Earth”).

environmental-political reasons” (qtd. in Long 258).⁶ So, too, for the most part, has the national press. A late 1990s *New York Times Magazine* article by environmental journalist Robert Sullivan featuring the then-spokesman for the Earth Liberation Front, duly records his subject’s protestations to the contrary but entitles its profile “The Face of Eco-Terrorism.” Whether intentionally or not, Sullivan follows right-wing anti-environmentalist practice in characterizing Abbey as the godfather of ecoterrorism (n. 7 below).

A related expression of this same tendency has been right-wing lumping of environmental radicalism with Islamic militancy, as when Paul Bremer (later given responsibility for a time for overseeing the U.S. occupation of Iraq) declared in his capacity as U.S. ambassador at large for counterterrorism under the first Bush administration that “like political terrorists, ecoterrorists” are caught in the grips of “an uncompromising ... vision” of “righting perceived wrongs, whether [it be] the ‘oppression of the Palestinian people’ or ‘the rape of Mother earth’ ” (qtd. in Rothenberg 208).

To my knowledge, no U.S. statutes outlawing ecoterrorism by name predate 9/11, and since then there has been at least one: a 2006 law enacted by the northeastern state of Pennsylvania, directed against “offenses against property intending to intimidate” persons “lawfully participating in an activity involving animals, plants, or natural resource facilities.” Animal rights militancy against research facilities seems to have been a major if not exclusive motivating concern (Rendell). But attempts to criminalize different forms of eco-radicalism, tree spiking for instance, go back at least two decades (DeLuca 115-17). And the remote origins of the Pennsylvania statute arguably date back to an early ’90s accord between ELF and the ALF (the *Animal* Liberation Front), publicly endorsing a strategy of collaborative “direct action” and thereby opening up the specter of a broader ecoterrorist front.⁷

6. The context of the statement implies that the definition has been in place for some time, and indeed the F.B.I.’s sweeping definition of “terrorism” as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” dates from as early as 1994 (FBI Terrorist Research and Analytical Center).

7. See (<http://www.cdfc.org/elf/htm>). “Direct action,” in practice, is an elastic term, varying according to context (*cf.* the quotation from John Barry above) to denote extralegal activism of whatever kind.

In the history of ecoterror rhetoric and anxiety, then, 9/11 marked an intensification but not a major turning point, much less an inception point. That, in turn, should prompt one to ask: What is the deeper cultural logic at work here? Why should tree-spiking—driving steel or iron wedges into trees in order to damage logging machinery—look so much more self-evidently like ecoterrorism than Shell Oil’s devastation of the Niger delta or Saddam Hussein’s extirpation of the so-called Marsh Arabs by ruining the ecology of the Tigris-Euphrates delta? And why the facile conflation of eco-sabotage (arson or “monkey wrenching”) with intent to kill?—a conflation that predates even the first Persian Gulf War, especially given that “by no reasonable metric [can ELF militancy] and animal-rights direct action combined be judged the premiere domestic threat of our times” compared to say drugs, prostitution, smuggling, white collar crime, etc.⁸ Furthermore, the most careful research to date into the ideology of ecomilitant groups (Taylor 1998 and 2003) stresses not only the record of zero human deaths so far—at least in the United States—but also the sociological improbability of ecomilitants becoming going homicidal, owing for example to their tendency not to sever ties with their families, to distrust charismatic authority, and to believe in the sacredness of life. Yet none of this stopped the “Wise Use” movement of the 1990s from targeting Earth-Firsters as terrorists, sometimes lumping them, as Crichton’s *State of Fear* would later do, together with mainstream greens. Event number one in founder Ron Arnold 40-year chronology of [eco] “terror” events is the young Edward Abbey “sawing down billboards in 1958” (12).⁹

Up to a point, the asymmetry with which the ecoterrorist label has been linked to actors on or beyond the social margins as against corporate or governmental actors is predictable enough, and so too even the hyperbolic representation of eco-militant tree-spiking to frustrate commercial logging and the torching of sport utility vehicles on car dealers’ lots as incipiently if not actually homicidal. After all, long before a subspecies of “eco” terrorism was identified, “terrorism” had been traditionally reserved for extralegal

8. See Roberts and, for a more scholarly argument, Amster.

9. Ron Arnold proceeds to identify *Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) as “the model for Earth First” and “an icon for all radical environmentalists” (123, 168). Arnold’s lengthy attempt to associate ecoradicalism with the notorious “Unabomber,” mathematician Theodore Kaczynski, now serving a life sentence for multiple letter-bomb homicides, has been generally discredited; see especially Long. But Arnold’s demonization of Edward Abbey, of which more below, including the billboard prank, has been picked up by more serious academic treatises on the ecoterror menace, e.g. Liddick.

attacks on establishments—until or unless the terrorists themselves become the establishment, of course. This usage has wide as well as ancient sanction, by no means confined to any one national imaginary. Yet, however paradoxically, there is some reason to believe that in a comparatively mobile, open society like the United States, anxiety about the threat of extralegal subversiveness might tend—at certain historical moments, anyhow—to assert itself with exceptionally great force: to produce anathemas wildly disproportionate to the facts.

Here I follow American historian Richard Hofstadter's classic diagnosis of "the paranoid style in American politics," by which Hofstadter meant the vigor of conspiracy phobia. Although he issued this diagnosis in a situation-specific context, during the height of the Cold War and with the phenomenon of Senator Joseph McCarthy's dire public accusations against communist subversives especially in mind, Hofstadter rightly insisted that unwarrantedly excessive fear of plots to overthrow the American system dates back to the earliest years of the republic: to early national paranoia about destabilization of the republic by French and/or British neo-imperialism. Why should it have endured in the face of the increasing consolidation of governmental institutions domestically and increasing American might abroad? Hofstadter, plausibly, saw the paranoid disposition in effect as a by product of the proverbial American dream: as nurtured by "the rootlessness and heterogeneity of American life and, above all, of its peculiar scramble for status and ... identity," such that no social group—left or right—ever feels wholly secure, even when empowered (51). To this diagnosis it might be added that in societies where property rights are crucial to the rule of law, property destruction may more readily than otherwise be deemed threatening to personhood. Hence poet-critic Gary Snyder's sardonic (and so far accurate) prediction that *Monkey Wrench Gang* would never become a commercial film, despite Abbey's having been paid a goodly sum for movie rights, because the novel "violates the most sacred American value: industrial private property" (qtd. in Cahalan 161).

This line of explanation points, then, to an endemic pathology historically distinctive—although doubtless not unique to U.S. civil society—that age-of-terror anxieties might be expected to reactivate. To the extent that is true, republican America would seem susceptible to, not immune from, the kind of socioanalytic model that psychologist Eric Fromm, in his book *The Sane Society* (1955), ventured after World War II with Nazi Germany as his prime case in point: the hypothesis that whole societies as well as individuals could under certain conditions be deemed

“insane.” Fromm’s thinking comported with political philosopher Hannah Arendt’s concurrent appraisal of the logic of the normalization of terror under totalitarian regimes, again with the Third Reich (and Stalinist Russia) as prime *exempla*. How they “can get so far toward realizing a fictitious, topsy-turvy world,” Arendt writes,

is that the outside nontotalitarian world, which always comprises a great part of the population of the totalitarian country itself, indulges also in wishful thinking and shirks reality in the face of real insanity just as much as the masses do in the face of the normal world. This common-sense disinclination to believe the monstrous is constantly strengthened by the totalitarian ruler ... who makes sure that no reliable statistics, no controllable facts and figures are ever published. (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 437)

This might serve quite well as a description of the effects of the contemporary western environmental dis-information industry¹⁰—except, of course, that western societies are clearly not “totalitarian” in the strong sense of the word intended by Arendt. More precisely suggestive of the species of cultural pathology in question is the analogy proposed by Jacques Derrida of systemic autoimmune disorder: the social body’s defenses attacked by that which it’s generated in order to defend itself: Afghan *muhajadin* trained by the U.S. during the Cold War become *ihadists*; U.S. commercial aircraft manned by western-educated pilots take down the Twin Towers, etc. (Borradori, ed. 94ff).

Our two novels both reflect this perverse logic: Abbey’s overtly, Crichton’s implicitly. In *Monkey Wrench Gang*, the eco-saboteurs’ pugnacious cutting edge is personified by war-damaged veteran George Washington Hayduke, the most violence-prone of the four gang members, who turns against the American military-industrial complex the training in strategy and munitions-making received in Vietnam that was supposed to make him a weapon in his nation’s defense. In *State of Fear*, the equivalent to this is the susceptibility of a crucial, inherently benign ingredient of high-tech capitalist society—green philanthropy—to being duped into subsidizing the dark extremists that would destroy the whole system. The “millionaire philanthropist” George Morton (43), NERF’s chief donor, must be shown the full enormity of its evil director’s machinations, as indeed he is in a sequence that culminates in his joining a perilous Kenner-led mission to frustrate the

10. See Buell 3-66.

ecoterrorists' plan to cause a cataclysmic tsunami worldwide in order to prove the imminent threat of climate-change-induced coastal warming. Convalescing from his near-death experience, Morton vows to start a "new environmental organization" truly dedicated, as the big-green agencies are not, to effective "management of complex systems," "eradication of poverty," and inventing "a new mechanism to fund research" (619-21). In short, all is well; progressive normalcy has returned; the social pathogen is eliminated. *Monkey Wrench Gang*, by contrast, is orchestrated so as to offer at its closure only the deceptive, transient appearance of renormalization. The other three gang members have ostensibly been rehabilitated as law-abiding citizens; Hayduke is thought to have been hunted down by a military-style operation using state police helicopters: "Oh, it's 'Nam again all right over again," Hayduke thinks as the cops close in on him, "With me as the last VC [Viet Cong] in the jungle" (368). Not so, however; the pathogen is not so easily eradicated. What looked from a distance like a human body blown to bits was only a dummy, a scarecrow Hayduke improvised at the last minute; in the final pages, he suddenly reappears to his astonished old companions, obviously unrepentant and intent on causing mischief under cover of his new name and respectable job (as a "night watchman" [386]). The stage is set for the book's sequel, *Hayduke Lives!* (1990)—and with it *Monkey Wrench Gang*'s after-life as an iconic carrier of the ecoterrorism gene.

Social pathology theory, then, may help demystify one's surprise that 9/11 did not make more of a difference than it did so far as the *institutionalization* of ecoterror anxiety within the U.S. was concerned: that at most it became slightly more heightened as a result of the shift culture critic David Simpson sums up in *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (2006), recycling Derrida's recycling of *Communist Manifesto* (2008) rhetoric: "the specter of terror has taken the place of the specter of communism" (145).

Yet there is also a more distinctive, portentous, far-reaching implication to the judgment that has fallen upon the ethics of eco-militancy as the result of terror phobia (whether dated from 9/11, or much earlier), an implication evident from the dubious conflation of quite different forms of extralegal resistance under the sign of terror.

Above and beyond other lines of explanation, the two commonest arguments for typing ecomilitants as future killers, the "one bad apple spoils the barrel argument" and the "slippery slope" or "some day it's bound to happen" argument,¹¹ both gain a readier hearing than analogous claims

11. For the first, see, for example, Ackerman (160); for the second, Garner (288).

about the dehumanizing effects of military or corporate discipline because the revolutionary paradigms of environmental value on which ecoradicalism tends to be based convert more quickly from harmlessly eccentric into grotesquely terrifying when cast in militant language—as, for example, when one ELF spokesman, Craig Rosenbraugh, (the same person *The New York Times Magazine* had profiled as “The Face of Eco-Terrorism”) ended his testimony before the Congressional Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health (2002) as follows: “All power to the people. Long live the earth liberation front. Long live the animal liberation front. Long live all the sparks attempting to ignite the revolution. Sooner or later the sparks will turn into flame” (qtd. in Leder and Probst 40).

The co-authors of the scholarly article where I first came across this statement argue on the basis of it and like pronouncements for likely future escalation in the level of violence beyond the ELF’s and ALF’s current preferred weapon, arson. Why is it that these obviously intelligent scholars writing in a respectable journal do not seriously consider the possibility that such eco-warrior rhetoric might be more metaphorical than literal? Why do they categorize such folk from the get-go as terrorists before presenting any data whatever about even arson and vandalism? The oversight seems to be more than just a matter of the non-literature person’s inability to parse the discourse of metaphor, against which Robert Frost issued his classic 1931 warning in “Education by Poetry: A Meditative Monologue,” although that may be one factor. A more fundamental reason, as the two scholars themselves make clear, is that their image of “environmental terrorists” arises from revulsion against what they take to be eco-militants’ off-the-chart anti-humanistic paradigms of environmental value: namely, “biocentrism” and “deep ecology.” (Leder and Probst 47, 39). By contrast, Douglas Long’s much more thorough 2004 monograph on ecoterrorism anxiety, quotes Rosenbraugh’s entire testimony (264-78) without jumping to the conclusion that the ELF is highly likely to target humans. In short, in an age that thinks of itself as an age of terror, the old canard of ecocentrism as *ipso facto* a kind of anti-humanist fascism can return with unprecedented force. In this mentality, ecocentrism of whatever sort stands presumptively under indictment as beyond the human pale, because, as part of the terror-phobic anxiety syndrome, the borderlines of what does and does not count as a legitimately “human” attitude are being more vigilantly, more stringently, policed.

Terror-phobia, then, makes it far easier at the turn of the twenty-first century than it was even during the Cold War to stigmatize a world view that

runs contrary to human interests and to make that charge stick, even when the underlying motive for doing so is nothing better than personal or corporate self-interest. That is why *Monkey Wrench Gang* will almost surely remain on the ecoterror timetable for the foreseeable future, and why the trend in ecofiction since Abbey's death in 1990 has been more Crichton-ish than not: to image bio-centrists not as heroes but as sociopaths.¹²

Perception of this eventuality has prompted calls by friends of philosophic biocentrism of one kind or another to tread more carefully and tone down their tactics, rhetorical and otherwise. As one frustrated animal rights advocate puts it, "if activists want to change the laws that hold other animals captive, they must first change the values of [society at larger]," and since animal rights is hardly "on society's radar screen at all" militant rhetoric, let alone militant action, is just "a gift to their critics" (Hall 93, 95).

It is hard to quarrel with the prudence of this assessment, at least if one holds (as I do) that violence perpetrated against persons and even property on behalf of an unpopular cause—however principled the actor may believe him or herself to be—in a polity where rule of law basically obtains and is widely thought to be supported by participatory consent of the governed is extremely hard to defend on principle and almost always self-defeating. If there is a positive benefit to a strategy of rigorous ecophilosophical restraint at a time when ecological emergencies are ignored or overridden by the sense of political-military emergency even when they are underlying causes of the latter (as with U.S. dependence on oil from the Middle East), that benefit lies in the wisdom of Arendt's precept: "The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world" (*On Violence* 80). But to those who would protest the systemic violence of anthropocentrism itself it may seem deeply frustrating and ironic that "restraint" should require one to spend the major part of one's energies admonishing more rambunctious associates to

12. The most nuanced of these novels, Kim Stanley Robinson's *Antarctica* (1998), treats ecomilitants as sinister invisibles refusing to renounce acts of extreme violence in Antarctica against scientists, low-impact questers and adventurers, and even neo-indigenous reinhabitants if the militants should deem them unacceptably bad continent. Randy Wayne White's *Dead of Night* (2005) invents a misguided postadolescent Abbeyesque "ecoteur" who becomes the tool of a megalomaniac perpetrator of biological warfare. The villain in William G. Tapply's *A Fine Line* (2002) is an evil policeman turned criminal by failure of a legal case against the fertilizer plant he holds responsible for his daughter's death, working in collusion (for a time) with the militant Spotted Owl Liberation Front.

behave, as with the anti-animal liberation militancy tract just cited, rather than on concentrating first and foremost on making the case for paradigms of environmental value that would dramatize how systemic human abuse of the nonhuman world is ultimately far more threatening both to it and to human survival than what is called ecoterrorism. To that end, the disproportion, ideological bias and chronic bad faith that marks the hegemonic deployment of the rhetoric of ecoterrorism name-calling must be exposed, as this essay has tried to do. Otherwise eco-resistance citizenship will be forever on the run.

Harvard University
U.S.A.

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