

The monkeywrench gang



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Edward Abbey uses The Monkey Wrench Gang as a comic episode to highlight a serious message that the American wilderness needs protection from the commercial enterprise that is impacting negatively on it. However, he uses this comic extravaganza. George Hayduke, the centre of the story is a Vietnam veteran and an ex-Green Beret who returns to the Southwestern part of the desert in the post war period and is at a loss when he finds the canyons and the and the rivers he cherishes so much under threat due to industrial development. Abbey believes in environmental conservation and that freedom occurs when one resists much and obeys little. He develops eco-sabotage by his campaign against the state led invasion of the Colorado Desert with the help of his dedicated team of eco-friendly people.

Government greed has brought about industrial development in the area that is vividly destroying the pristine beauty of the land and it is this that Abbey will not take kindly. Hayduke is joined by three fellow rebels who share the same disgust from the abuse of the desert and wish to take some action. The other rebels include: Bonnie Abzug, the Bronx exile and pro-feminist, Smith-the outcast and guide through the wilderness and technician who is rare to see and Doctor Sarvis, M-the liberal who torches billboards. They down Colorado river to wage war on the highway, bridge and dam builders as well the miners and those cutting the vegetation since they are destroying the environment and turning into wasteland their natural habitat. Conflict, chaos and comedy blend in the course of these men. Abbey believes in team work as depicted in the words of Smith who seldom speak: One man alone can be pretty dumb sometimes, but for real bona fide stupidity, there ain't nothing can beat teamwork (Abbey, 1985). Abbey's position on Freedom Abbey believed in freedom as illustrated in The Monkey

Wrench Gang. He opposed control and overpopulation that come with city life and this was a mild opposition to the cities. The state was acting in a selfish manner by allowing the destruction of the desert land and it is this that Abbey was against in the comedy extravaganza, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*. The citizens in this book take direct action the war on nature by the state. However, the characters in this book, the gang, limit their activities on attacking technology alone. They avoid passing any violence to humans in their eco struggle. The gang uses guerilla war tactics to wage war on the anti-nature developers in America who will stop at nothing to ensure they serve their own selfish interests. Direct action emerges since freedom was at the moment curtailed by the selfish developers. Institutions like banks make the conditions to be harsh so that people can go to borrow money from them. The consequence is the up-spiraling of energy, land, capital, water and personal space due to racial and class friction, culture and identity erosion, state warfare and migration. Abbey realized that the politics of America was to blame for the states of affairs and advanced the concept of direct action. The use of peaceful means will be futile in the face of the determined developers and the government support to these enemies. This implies that legal protests and court battles would also be in futility. The political system does not give room for those they consider to jeopardize their interests; freedom is therefore gotten by direct action according to Abbey (Hart Slovic, 2004). The earth First doctrine is in pursuant to the matter of conserving Mother Nature and combating any form of environmental pollution as illustrated by the rebels in the book who champion the eco friendly course. The overpopulation of industries in the city should not be treated as the excuse of destroying the canyons. Abbey is determined to follow his course

to ensure the environment is saved." My job is to save the fucking wilderness. I don't know anything else worth saving" (Abbey 1985). The Monkey Wrench Gang is viewed by the system in this book as a futile course which will have no effect on the public nor deter it from its development mission. Abbey was careful in his writing and in fact chose to make the book humorous so that the eco war does not escalate to a full fledged bloody war. The system was not disturbed by the tone in the book since abbey injected humor, partying, sex so that the story could have a light tone. The system soft peddled the impact of the eco friendly campaigns and thought it would culminate to their advantage since it could not awaken the spirit of those in the city, away from the desert, who had their own issues to contend with. Hayduke is comical and is depicted as someone who cannot even hurt a fly although he is harmful in real sense. Abbey makes use of this technique to hide his direct action. This lighthearted treatment of helps the story from the dreaded Bolshevik pamphlet, that it is, the story is saved from being monotonous and boring. There is much adventure, the characters chase each other in the slick rock desert and there is gunfire that keeps the reader captivated with the events (Abbey, Peterson, 2003). A number of projects in Colorado River area are hit by the gang. There is a coup at the onset of the story. The dam is demolished during the dedication ceremony by the detonation of a device put under the bridge by the gang, a grand coup indeed. This coup introduces other events in the subsequent chapters and serves to captivate the reader and hold their attentions in suspense. The profiles of the gang members, formation of the gang, its evolution and the subsequent devolution by state forces and local businessmen, mostly, the Mormons is illustrated in the first phase of the first chapter. The story is set

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in the rugged country in the U. S. Abbey is full of contempt of the Mormons due to their scripture, mixture and the fact that they are Rotarians.

Destruction of the environment that is practical even today is seen in the building of the Glen Canyon dam and the river begins to back file. Several thousand miles of desert canyons will be drowned by this dam the gang is aware of this and resent the idea in silence. Doc Sarvis breaks the silence and hits things up by his comment. The reason there are so many people on the river these days is because there are too many people everywhere else. The wilderness once offered a plausible way of life. Now it functions as a psychiatric refuge. Soon there will be no refuge. Soon there will be no wilderness. The madness becomes universal. The gang is a revolutionary force which does not target human operators. Abbey knew that the security forces and the heathens would brush shoulders and even begin to assassinate each other due to rapid development. The characters in the gang are arrested for their course and serve their time. However, they go back to their activities since they can never relent in their quest. They can not sit down as the bulldozers tear out the land. This makes them brush shoulders with the system as they conduct their war again and are on the run from the system (Hart Slovic, 2004). Abbey's tale of the Monkey Wrench Gang is a controversial, hilarious and audacious effort that is awakening the spirit of resistance war against environment degradation not only in America but in the world over. It is a novel about freedom and ignition to environmental activism. Nature is victimized in the American west and Abbey will stop at nothing to agitate for resistance against this brutality to the environment by the government and businessmen who conspire to build bridges and dams in the canyons (Abbey, Peterson, 2003).