PANDANGAN DUNIA EKOLOGIS DALAM DESERT SOLITAIRE KARYA EDWARD ABBEY

Ecological Worldview in Edward Abbey’s Desert Solitaire

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AMSTRAK

Bahkan satu masalah, berdasarkan yang dianggap dihidupi dunia saat ini adalah kritis ekolog. Berbagai usaha telah dilakukan, baik dalam bentuk lindakan-hil-
dakaan lingkungan maupun lingkungan yang terkait dengan lindakan-lindakan
religius upaya-upaya yang dilakukan untuk mengatur keterkaitan ekologi dalam kondisi polisi menghindari lindakan-lindakan lindung memang upaya-upaya yang dilakukan untuk menurunkan keadaan kehidupan oleh ekologi dalam
iluminasi dan sistem filosofi, didapatkan lebih dalam bentuk pengambilan
tata cara. Abbey menyatakan bahwa quoted bahkan menciptakan satuan bentuk
atau pengambilan dalam sistem fiksi-fiksi melalui juga mempahami "Religiusitas,
anda bentuk pengambilan religius yang menjadi pelamin bagi setiap dalam
menilai kembali apa yang menjadi upaya-pemahaman baik untuk mengetahui apa
Bahkan mengagumkan religiusitas pandangan dunia yang bisa terlihat
Abby menganggapkan masih menerima hal-hal yang masih bisa samaart dan
dalam. Media ini memerintah upaya yang dilakukan dalam rangka
meningkatkan desa-desa spiritual bagi kondisi ekologi. Bukalah masih
kenalannya bisa menjadi lingkungan dan menjadi lingkungan sehari
Eksesif dan simfoni tidak bisa dikenal dengan dari upaya tersebut.
Berdasarkan konsep yang telah menjadi memahami pendekatan-pen-
dekatan religius dan filsafat pada penentuan nilai-nilai, dengan cara menget-
dan-dan-arah, memahami kembali kehidupan agama dan mem-
paradigma dalam sistem fiksi untuk memandu: fiksi-fiksi dalam
Kata kunci ekologi -- pandangan dunia -- religiusitas -- mysticisme.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most serious problems the world is facing today is the
ekological crisis. This problem to a great extent exists, as Capra (1982) has
elevated, because of excessive technological growth which is integral with

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the economic system expending high technology to increase productivity. This growth has created an environment in which life has become physically and mentally unhealthy. It has brought about polluted air, annoying noise, traffic jams, chemical contaminants, radiation threats, and many other sources of physical and psychological stress. The problem is so serious that ignorance of it could threaten the existence of the human race and other life forms on earth.

Little attention has been paid to the problem, particularly among third world nations such as Indonesia, at least until the last few years. Despite this lack of attention, the awareness of the threat has encouraged some individuals and groups of people, particularly environmentalists, to take some action. Several efforts have been put forward, either in the form of direct or indirect actions. Devall and Sessions (1985) have written that the direct actions include attempts to cultivate an ecological consciousness in the political context with legislation reforms, political pressure, coalition formation, etc.; while the indirect ones are those directed to encourage awareness about "deep ecology." By "deep ecology" Devall and Sessions mean "a way of developing a new balance and harmony between individuals, communities and all of nature."

Some writers greatly concerned with ecological issues may take an active part in collective environmental campaigns, but some may confine themselves to their individual actions which do not necessarily lessen their concern. Some individual actions may even have greater influence. Rachel Carson, for example, achieved world-wide popularity with her Silent Spring in 1962, although the book may over-simplify environmental problems as she focused on the pollution caused by DDT and other chemicals, whereas environmental problems entail much more than just chemical pollution. Other people who also have contributed to the growth of ecological concern include the Romantic and transcendentalist writers, nature philosophers, and others who write about the natural world. The works of these authors, in turn, may be classified into various categories, but in terms of their roles they share something in common, namely cultivating an ecological consciousness.

Although not popular in Indonesia and is even something alien to the tradition of Indonesian literature, nature writing has a long history and has established itself as a distinct genre in American literature. Despite the abundance of nature writing, the genre, as Wallace describes in his "The Nature of Nature Writing," is not easy to define. The history of nature writing shows that this literary genre has many different types. Despite such great variety, John J. Lyden (1990) argues that nature writing to a certain extent can be identified by its general attributes: natural history information, personal responses to nature, and philosophical interpretation of nature.

Abbey's Desert Solitaire undoubtedly shows his great concern with ecological problems. The concern, however, expresses itself not in terms of scientific knowledge or a philosophical system, but rather in terms of a religious experience. This does not necessarily mean he is ignorant of ecology in terms of science and philosophy. Rather, he seems to suggest that ecology is not merely a body of knowledge or a philosophy but a kind of religiosity. By religiosity is meant a kind of religious devotion by which one
conducts his life without necessarily referring to a certain formal religion. Manipunwija (1982) elucidates that different people committing themselves to different formal religions may share the same experience of religious devotion. On the contrary, he argues that those who claim themselves to belong to a certain religious community may not have such devotion.

Abbey’s religiosity frequently appears to indicate a mystical mode of relation between man and nature. It may sound ironic to juxtapose such religiosity and ecology, since religiosity is primarily based on beliefs, while ecology has its bases in scientific knowledge. Yet, as the present study intends to demonstrate, religiosity does not necessarily conflict with scientific knowledge. With respect to ecology, the two may support each other. Religiosity may give scientific knowledge a spiritual basis so that it is not trapped in its barren principles, just as scientific knowledge can give religiosity logical and rational abstractions which may intensify the devotion.

In order to better expose what Abbey “is evoking” the approach employed in sociological, namely Goldmann’s Genetic Structuralism, which tries to relate the structure of the work to other larger structures, the structures of human realities.

Genetic structuralism is a study of literature in terms of sociology. It presupposes the close relationship between literature and sociology. Elizabeth and Tom Burns (1973) in their introduction to Sociology of Literature and Drama describe this intimacy by defining literature as “an attempt to make sense of our lives,” and sociology as “an attempt to make sense of the ways in which we live our lives.” Alan Swinewood (Laurensen and Swinewood, 1973) claims that “at the most basic level sociology and literature share a similar concerns.” He argues that sociology is “the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institutions and of social processes,” whereas literature concerns “man’s social world, his adaptation to it, and his desire to change it.” The sociology of literature views literature as a social phenomenon or a social institution which, as Harry Levin noted, is not only the effect of social causes, but also a cause of social effects (Burns and Burns, eds, 1973: 62).

Swinewood (Laurensen and Swinewood, 1972) characterizes three perspectives commonly used in sociology of literature. The first perspective views literature as a social document arguing that it provides a mirror to the age. The second gives more emphasis on the literary production, and especially the socialization of the writer. The third is interested in the ways in which a work of literature is received by a particular society at a specific historical moment (See also Janus, 1986).

Genetic structuralism, as elaborated by Goldmann in his "Genetic Structuralism in the Sociology of Literature," bases itself on the hypothesis that "all human behavior is an attempt to give meaningful response to a particular situation which tends to create a balance between the subject of action and the environment" (Goldmann, 1975: 156). This tendency to equilibrium, however, remains unstable since as soon as an equilibrium is relatively satisfactory, there will be a transformation which leads to a new equilibrium (Goldmann, 1975: 156).
Goldman’s hypothesis is based on his identification of the fundamental characteristics of human behavior. The first is that all human behavior tends towards significance and rationality (Burns and Burns, ed., 1973: 115). By rationality is meant that human behavior is always a response to the problems posed by environment and that this response points toward significance (Burns and Burns, ed., 1973: 115). The second is that social groups have a tendency towards creating some overall consistent pattern out of the totality of sectional parts. And the third is that human behavior constantly tends to move towards transcendence.

ANALYSIS

One of the most important things portrayed in Desert Solitaire is the narrator’s mystical mode of relation between himself and nature. This mode of relation is a kind of development of love for nature which has been a prevailing theme in Abbey’s works prior to Desert Solitaire, and it continues even in his later works. Desert Solitaire is an important milestone in Abbey’s life as a literary artist since it signifies his maturity in terms of the quest for spiritual values of nature. It seems that Abbey has reached an important conclusion which he arrives at the mode of relation between man and nature as it is found in Desert Solitaire.

His earlier writings, as Garth McCann (1977) demonstrates, are characterized by the tension between the wilderness or Roar West and the corruption of modern industrial civilization. It is true that the tension remains even in Desert Solitaire, but the difference between Desert Solitaire and the earlier works is that the tension is now resolved in the sense that the protagonist has come to a state of balance. How does he achieve this? I am not sure. McCann’s opinion that the balance is achieved “simply by leaving the wilderness as is and keeping industrialism where it is.” McCann’s statement suggests that the balance is achieved by drawing a boundary which demarcates the wilderness and industrialism. The drawing of the demarcation implies a denial of the continuing growth of both the wilderness and human society and of their relationship, which eases the tension. If the balance is achieved by forging the tension, or pretending that there is no such tension, it is not a balance then, at least not the true one.

In “Down the River” Abbey is trying to give clarification of the term wilderness. Abbey argues that the official definition by the government that wilderness is “a minimum of not less than 5000 contiguous acres of roadsless area” is not sufficient since the term “wilderness” involves something more. Obviously, Abbey understands wilderness not only in its physical term but in a deeper sense in terms of its relation to the psychology of man. He distinguishes wilderness as substance and that as essence. By wilderness as substance is meant the area, the plants, the animals, the rocks, the water, the desert, and the other forms of wildlife in the area. Descriptively, it means the national parks which represent an entirely different world from the modern urban world. It has something to do with the beauty and terror of nature in its own economy which man may enjoy for its sense of loneliness.
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piled science and technological products that have cut man off from his environment and isolated him within the prison of his own making (DS: 274). Civilization, Abbey says, which destroys what little remains of the wild, the spare and original, is cutting itself off from its origin and betraying the principle of civilization itself. Modern man will make himself an exile from the earth and he will know at last, if he is still capable of feeling anything, the pain and agony of final loss (DS: 192).

The second aspect of Western culture which he opposes is anthropocentrism, the opinion that the world exists solely for the sake of man (DS: 274). Anthropocentrism leads man to think himself superior to other creatures on earth and to dominate and exploit nature on the basis of "narrow" humanism. Anthropocentrism cuts man off from his larger community, excluding the other members of the world family. It cuts him off from his environment which sustains him and makes him alienated from the world in which he lives.

The third is its capitalistic system of economy. Abbey, as James M. Atan examines, links the ideology of man-centeredness to the politics of capitalism and its philosophy of unlimited growth. He sees unlimited growth, as Atan points out, the "ideology of cancer cell" which destroys the very basis of life supporting it. Abbey argues that growth for the sake of growth is a cancerous madness (DS: 145). He is deeply aware that such cancerous growth is dangerous and eventually will destroy man's own existence. The capitalistic system has made people "eager to profit from the labor of others, to harvest what they had not sown" (DS: 75). In one way or another the politics of capitalism also colors interhuman relations. The relationship between Mr. Graham and Albert T. Husk is an unhealthy human relation as it is chiefly based on vested interest (DS: 76-72). Mr. Graham in fact does not really intend to help Husk but he wants to deceive and exploit him. The chapter dealing with the story of Mr. Graham and Albert T. Husk provides examples of man's tendency to exploit natural and human resources to satisfy the greed of individuals by the mining of uranium ore and the trading and selling of claims and shares in mining companies.

Abbey apparently also has some suspicion about religious institutions which are either incapable of giving culture proper values, or indifferent to it, or even worse they comprise a factor constituting it. His belief that the forests and mountains, and the desert canyons are holier than churches (DS: 60) and his intention to confront "the bare bones of existence, the elemental and fundamental ... to meet God or Medusa face to face" (DS: 6) indicate his distrust of, or at least dissatisfaction with religious institutions. Atan (1983b) suggests that Abbey wants to establish a direct relation with the deity instead of through the mediation of an established church. His juxtaposition of God and Medusa implies that to him God, just like Medusa, is a myth, or that God is a mere hypothesis that has neither been justified nor falsified, or that God is an open concept subject to redefinition. It does not necessarily mean that he does not believe in God, but he has a different perception about Him from that described by religious institutions.

Without denying the influence on him, Abbey attempts to free himself from the culture. He tries to perceive life differently from most of his contem-
poraries. He questions what other people have considered to be established, including the existence of God and man. Abbey has a strong urge to answer some questions about God’s existence but he experiences a sort of anxiety to find the difference between what he has heard about God and how he conceives and experiences him:

God? ... who the hell is he? There is nothing here, at the moment, but
me and the desert. And that’s the truth. Why confuse the issue by
dragging in a superhuman entity? ... Beyond physics, mathematics. I am
not an atheist but an agnostic. Be true to the earth (DS: 208).

It is definitely a bold statement to parallel earthenism with a formal
religion. It sounds as a contract to a formal religion. He refuses to call
himself an atheist while he is not sure of God’s existence, at least in his
theological term which is different from that of established religious insti-
tutions. To him God is beyond man’s capacity of understanding, then
He is a supernatural entity. To deal with God is not a matter of religion or
religious institution but religiosity or personal and devotional relations with Him.
The quality of man is not determined by whether he believes in God or whether
he commits himself to a particular religious institution, but whether or not
he conforms the existence of basic laws which govern the universe and how
he devotes and commits himself to those laws. According to Abbey, God,
whatever the definition is, resides in Nature. When Abbey is in the canyon,
he is contemplating it and inquiring whether it is the place of God. He expects
to see pure spirit, pure being, or pure disembodied intelligence although
the contemplation keeps returning to his environment. He then finds that the
desire to meet pure spirit, pure being, or pure intelligence is only an
ancient dream, since there are only water, leaves, and silence. This does not mean
incapacity to pure spirit, pure being, or pure intelligence but rather he considers
that water, leaves, and silence are sacred; nature itself has a divine quality.

In his discussion on rocks, he says: “... in my opinion they are best
enjoyed in situ, where God himself, so to speak, and the leisurely economy
of Nature have seen fit to deposit them” (DS: 70). Abbey insists that to be
true to the earth is a kind of religious devotion to God which is no less than
the established rituals and services in churches. By being true to the earth, man
can give meaning to his life through his moral choices based on an earthly
morality, “let us behave accordingly” (DS: 80). From his notion of original sin,
it is obvious that Abbey shares Leopold’s land ethic. In A Sand County
Almanac (1970), Leopold writes that a thing is right when it tends to
preserve the integrity, stability, and the beauty of the biotic community and
that it is wrong when it tends otherwise.” Abbey’s definition of the true original
sin as the decline in the sense of the sacredness of nature partakes of the
notion which lies all around us...” (DS: 190) clearly corresponds to Leopold’s moral
notion.

In one way or another, Abbey apparently identifies a sort of degrada-
tion within some religious communities in which people neglect and are
indifferent to the truth, the meaning of nature. This brings either the failure
of the institution to communicate the truth or the irrelevance of its teachings
to deal with actual problems.
That is why he does not rely himself upon other people's speculation and rationalization of life. He wants to experience it all himself. He wants to free himself from present culture, however strong its influence on him, including the scientific and religious tradition. He is trying to re-examine, or recast man's perception of life—to meet God or budadsa face to face—and to accept all the consequences—not everything human in himself. This is due to his conception that the new perception will require man to change many aspects of his life.

The scene of "The Serpents of Paradise" (DS: 17-24) may in some respects illustrate the new worldview which is different from the old one which unfortunately has shaped his mind. Abbey, thinking that the presence of mice in his trailer may attract rattlesnake, suddenly realizes that the reptile is thinking of it only a couple of inches from his neck. His first impulse is to get his loaded revolver, a huge Bubba Webley .45. On second thought, however, he hesitantly thinking that shooting the creature at such close distance is murder. While hesitating, other considerations come to his mind that his duty as a park ranger is "to protect, preserve, and defend all living things." It is not his duty, however, that prevents him from killing the snake, but rather his conviction. Even if that were not the case, he says, I have personal conviction to hold (DS: 20). The scene represents two different worldviews which Canra (1967) categorizes into the mechanistic view of life and the holistic and ecological view of life. Abbey's first impulse to get the revolver and kill the rattlesnake represents the former whereas his second thought the latter.

The first view of life has shaped Abbey's former attitude and becomes an idiosyncrasy which manifests itself in instinct-like impulses. His awareness of the flaws of such a view, however, makes Abbey create his own worldview as reflected by his second thought. This worldview, Capra (1982) calls as the new vision of reality, is based on the awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena either physically, biologically, psychologically, socially, or culturally. It views life in terms of a system that is based on the principles of relationship and integration. Capra (1982) defines systems as integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units. This approach does not focus on basic substances, but rather on basic principles of organization. He insists that every organism from the smallest bacterium to humans is an integrated whole and thus a living system.

Abbey sees the unity of all nature, including man, as an organized system that works on the basis of a symbiotic relationship. Each component plays an important role as the others and each is dependent upon the others. "If there is something wrong with one of the components, it will also affect the others and thus disturb the system. Abbey sees this unity as a mystical union, "the incommunicable union of contradictory truths" (DS: 214). In his discussion on the flower and their relations to the desert insects (DS: 28), he also labels this unity the unity of opposites (utakas mine).

According to Abbey humanism does not belong only to man, but to other living things as well. He believes that "All men are brothers," but men must not conceive brotherhood exclusively, since "All living things on earth
are kindred. Obviously he defines humanism in a broader sense when he calls himself a humanist and yet he "would rather kill a man than a snake" (DS:20). There is no superiority of one organism over another before the laws of life. Man cannot destroy other beings on the basis of narrowly-defined humanism. He believes that all life forms, despite the diversity, belong to one big family. He calls this integration of all natures "kindred" in which opposites no longer contradicted.

Abbey's concept of kindred is similar to Leopold's biotic community in that it extends the notion of community in which man is only a part. If Nowy (1947) in his Human Density longs for the emergence of universal thought, or world-consciousness, which may help man conceive his whole existence as one, Abbey goes further in his writing. The concept of kindred goes beyond Leopold's biotic community which, despite its remarkable development, is confined to animate being. Abbey's kindred not only conceives that all humans are one, or all living things are one, but all things, both animate and inanimate, are one, including the rocks, the water, and the stone.

This concept of kindred also extends the notion of rights. The inclusion of nature within the community consequently includes the acceptance of its rights; it expands, by Nash's expression, "the natural rights into the rights of nature." In an anthological volume edited by Michael Tobias (1983), Roderick Nash demonstrates in a diagram that shows the expanding (American) concept of rights from the signing of Magna Carta in 1215 to the passage of Endangered Species Act in 1973. The diagram shows that the concept of right in Magna Carta is limited to Englishmen, and it extends to the American colonists with the Declaration of Independence (1776). It continues to expand to the slaves with Emancipation Proclamation (1863) and to women with the 19th Amendment (1920). The Indians possess the right after the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), the laborers with the National Labor Relations Act (1935). The Blacks get their more secured rights the last of all other human communities with the passage of Civil Rights Act of 1964 which is only a few years prior to the passage of Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Such a view of man counters the belief, which some formal religions hold, that man is a superior being and that the world was created to meet his needs. Abbey insists, however, that he is not against humanity, "could I be against humanity without being against myself, whom I love ..." (DS: 274). He argues that he is only opposed to man-centeredness. He realizes that the concept of kindred may be painful and bitter for some to hear, but he strongly believes that that is a truth which man is obliged to spread (DS:24). Nature, he argues, has the curious capability to remind mankind that the world of men is small and dependant upon another greater world, just like sea and sky which surround Leopold's biotic community, define its remarkable development, and greater and deeper than ours, a world which surrounds and sustains the little world of men" (DS: 41-2).

Abbey accepts the so-called predator-prey relationship, but he insists that the relationship is not that between enemies but between friends by which one fulfills the need of the other based on foodness, sympathy, genuine affection, and love under a well-organized system of operations and
procedures. The death of a prey by its predator is to keep the life cycle and the well-organized system operating, and so is the death of a human being since it means "making room for the living." As James M. Aiton (1982) points out, Abbey sees death—both human and nonhuman—as the central fact of the ecosystem. Death is not to be feared but to be accepted joyfully, just like the rabbit in its last moment before the owl eats it into edible portion. He says death is a fascinating abstraction, the conclusion to a syllogism or the denouement of a stage drama (DS: 94).

Abbey's ecological worldview results in religiosity which does not necessarily refer to any particular formal religion. Manguwijija (1982) distinguishes "religiosity" from "religion." He argues that a (formal) religion refers to the institutional devotion to God or "Higher World" in its formal aspects, established rules and laws, and the whole organization of Scriptural understanding and interpretation comprising social dimensions. Religiosity, on the other hand, refers to the inner aspects and personal conceptions impuluses that expresses a spiritual intimacy, namely, a personal inclination comprising an individual's totality of self. Religiosity is more interested in such basic questions as "Where are we coming from?", "Where are we going to?", and "Which way and how are we going?". Manguwijija further depicts that religiosity does not deal with concepts but with experience, that is, perception of the totality of self prior to analysis and conceptualization.

Abbey’s religiosity is very clear in his attempts to answer those basic questions. He sees that man is just like other living things in that he is subject to the laws of the organized system. His life and death is part of the "robust, brutal" but "clean and beautiful process" of life itself. Abbey views life in a more egalitarian way in that man is as important or unimportant as the other beings. He is not a master but a member of nature. To live the true life, man should understand his own nature and his place in the universe. He should be aware of the unity of all things and should integrate himself into the system. Unlike the Judeo-Christian tradition which is anthropocentric, Abbey’s view of life is ecological. His claim that he is an earthist suggests his attempt to establish an ecolology. He attempts to find a spiritual or religious basis for ecological concern. Apparently, his emphasis on the earth is due to the fact that earth is the immediate phenomena that links human beings to the entire universe.

If things should be categorized into sacred and profane, according to Abbey’s belief, everything in nature is in itself sacred. Forests, mountains, and deserts are just as holy as Christian churches or Hindu and Buddhist temples. With regard to human behavior, any human action is virtuous as long as it is directed to keep the ecology in balance.

Since in ordinary life, realities appear fragmented and disintegrated, it is necessary for man to, in Capra’s phrase, "readjust his mind by centering and quieting it through meditation." It is clear that Abbey has his own meditation while contemplating, communicating, or being with nature which results in the mystical mode of relation between himself and nature. The term meditation, as Capra (1991) elaborates, literally means "mental equilibrium" which refers to the balanced and tranquil state of mind in which the basic unity of the universe is experienced. The point is not whether or not the
mode can be classified into one of the various categories of mysticism since the emphasis is more on what one experiences and feels about nature. In some way or another, however, particularly if seen from the terminologies employed, Abbey's mysticism is much similar to Eastern mysticism—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism—which Capra (1991) labels the religious philosophies. The similarity basically lies on the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelatedness of all things and events, the experience of all phenomena in the world as manifestations of a basic oneness which, as Capra (1991) elaborates, becomes the most important characteristic of Eastern mysticism.

Clearly during his meditation Abbey experiences mystical states in which he feels the union between himself and the universe and reaches the ultimate reality. Since a mystical state is a matter of experience which one cannot feel unless one experiences it oneself, it can never be described by words because, as Capra (1991) writes, it lies beyond the realm of intellect from which our words and concepts are derived. Even if it can to some extent be described, the description is always inadequate.

In general, Abbey's mystical experiences result from the consciousness of his union with nature, he feels that he is not a stranger to nature but part of it. When he first arrives at the Arch, for example, despite his knowledge that he is going to be alone in that he will not have a human companion, he feels lonely. Then he identifies that companionship is not always in terms of human beings. He can establish a companionship with things both animate and inanimate. He is tempted to establish a particular relation with a juniper tree. He wants "to look at and into it in itself." He says he dreams of a "hard and brutal mysticism" in which the naked self merges with a nonhuman world and yet somehow survives still intact as an individual separate (italics mine). He then finds that the odor of burning juniper evolves in magical circulations. The tree continues to elude him although he claims he has failed to discover the significance in its form, to make a connection through its life. He suspects that its surface is also its essence. He wonders whether it really has a heart as he attempts to connect it by means of intuition, sympathy, and empathy.

After his "guilty" experiment with the rabbit, however, he feels "purified." The purification perhaps is due to his "repentance" and his "confession" that he has not meant to harm. He examines his soul and he finds it as white as snow. At that moment he feels that he is no longer a stranger from another world, he no longer feels isolated from "the source of fertile life" around him. He says "I have entered into this one" (italics mine). At this moment he identifies that his existence is inseparable from the world he has entered. He is aware of the unity of all things—precious and grey, bitter and vicinit, animate and inanimate—which urges him to admit "We are kindred all of us...

On another occasion he wants to feel that he is always part of his environment which comforts him. He prefers to leave the flashlight in his pocket instead of using it. He argues that when he switches it on his eyes adapt to it, and he can see only the small pool of light it makes and so he is isolated. By leaving it off, however, he remains a part of his environment and
his vision has no definite boundary. He feels the same thing with his trailer since it shuts him off from the natural world. By staying outside the trailer, he feels how the mighty stillness embraces and includes him. Instead of loneliness, he feels loneliness and a quiet excitement. However, he stops abruptly just after the word loneliness and a quiet excitation. He does not want to elaborate the feeling further. It seems that he does not want to blur the feeling with concepts which are basically intellectual.

When he passes through these mystical moments, he feels as if he were under the influence of drugs which he calls narcotic hours. Instead of causing drowsiness, however, it sharpens and heightens vision, touch, hearing, taste, and smell which enables him to understand the clarity, integrity, and diversity of natural existence. He understands that nature exists for its own sake and not for man.

Despite this sharpened and heightened vision of reality, however, he also experiences a state of lunacy which makes him unable to distinguish what is and himself is due to the fact that he is inseparable from nature; he is part of it. When he sees nature, he sees himself and the reverse is true.

When he experiences such mystical moments, he feels highly excited. When he is enjoying his meal, for example, he is tempted to contemplate a far larger world, which he calls a world extending "into a past and future without any limits known to human mind." He makes contact with the larger world by taking off his shoes and digging his toes in the sand which gives him an exhilarating feeling and leads him to equanimity (DS: 111).

In describing the mystical excitement Avery often employs a comparison. In the following quotation, for instance, he uses the image of a star melting into vapor which flows through his finger. Besides the flowing water and smoke, he uses the image of having sexual intercourse to describe the mystical experience. When he and Ralph are paddling along the river, for example, he associates the joy and pleasure of the flowing water with the satisfaction, joy and pleasure of a man having sexual intercourse with a virgin girl. He says, "my amities have vanished and I feel instead a sense of carnal-like security of achievement and joy, a pleasure almost equivalent to that first entrance—from the outside—into the neck of the woman" (DS: 176).

From Averys mystical mode of relation between man and nature it is clear that ecology for him is not only a matter of science and philosophy but religion as well, since a mystical experience in its essence is religious experience.

Why he then goes on to mysticism suggests his attempts to establish spiritual bases for ecological consciousness. It is not coincident that Averys shares a similar view to that held by coasta, a Romantic writer as Thoreau. Donald Worster (1977), who considers Thoreau as "a representative voice for an important aspect of Romanticism," argues that Romanticism is "fundamentally hierarchical." James M. Acows in "Abbe and Thoreau: Nature, Politics, and Politics of Nature" (1983a) demonstrates not only that Thoreau is a holist but also low Thoreau and Averys think alike in some ways and differently in other ways.
Apprently Abbey attempts to accomplish what Thoreau has left in
hesitancy. In one way or another, Abbey shares Thoreau's view that a natural
purity does not require an elaborate theology (Worster, 1977) but his
carthism at least provides a place for the Romantic revolt against Christi-
tianity. Thoreau's continued attempt to define God in the traditional way
(Worster, 1977), however, indicates his affinity for the Christian theologv,
while Abbey's statement that man "may find proof for or against His exist-
ence" greatly eliminates the affinity or even cuts it off altogether.

Again it is not coincident when environmentalists then develop such
an attempt as that conducted by Abbey to establish spiritual or moral bases
for ecological consciousness. The greening of religion, or ecologi\y, and the
greening of philosophy, or sometimes known as esopky, are but the
that people committing themselves to different religions have established
some religious, and philosophical approaches to environmentalism by finding
scriptural bases, reinterpretting religious beliefs, and developing a philosophi-
cal system to accommodate demands for environmental ethic.

CONCLUSION

As cited by Stephen Trimble in the introduction to Words from the
Land: Encounters with Natural History Writing, Abbey argues that a writer
has a moral obligation to be the conscience of his society and that "it is the
duty of a writer to try to make the world better; however futile the effort
might be." In one way or another, Abbey's notion of responsibility cor-
responds with, if not confirms, Goldmann's hypothesis on the tendency of
the human behavior to create an equilibrium as a response to a particular
situation (Goldmann, 1975). Apparently, it is in this notion of responsibility
which induces Abbey to "employ the desert figures as the medium for
evasion."

The previous analysis has demonstrated that Abbey opposes Western
culture because it is the product of an anthropocentric view of life. He
identifies that the problem of the society is more cultural than political.
He knows, as Wendell Berry (1985) argues, that his country is not being
destroyed by bad politics; it is being destroyed by a bad way of life. Abbey
suggests that cultural problems cannot be separated from the view of life; that
generates the culture. He insists that Western culture will not be able to solve
such problems as poverty, discrimination, extravagance, the lack of freedom,
and unhealthy environment unless it reconsTucts itself by changing the
worldview upon which it is based.

The question is why he seems to confine himself on environmental
issues. Wendell Berry in "A Few Words in Favor of Edward Abbey" (1985)
argues that Edward Abbey is "a defender of some things that environmen-
talists defend, but he does not write merely in defense of what we call "the
environment,"" Abbey himself frequently insists that he is not an envi-
ronmentalist, despite his writing on environmental issues. Berry (1985)
argues that Abbey speaks not only for environmentalists but a much broader front than that of any movement. He is fighting for the survival, not only of nature, but of human nature, of culture, as only our heritage of works and hopes can define it." Apparently, this argument illustrates Abbey's notion of "material" and "medium" as he remarks in his introduction to Desert Solitaire.

The previous analysis shows that Desert Solitaire is popular not merely because it has created such a myth and cult that, as William Flummer (1982) has noted, hundreds of people "flood into the Arches National Monument each summer to see his house trailer which is no longer there; rather, because it deals with such a basic problem of the human existence as a worldview—ecological worldview. Evidently, what Abbey evokes in Desert Solitaire is the awareness that Western culture needs a new worldview that views life in terms of systems based on the principles of relationships, unity, integration and wholeness; that views man not as master over nature but only member; that gives all nature equal rights; that idealizes a simple life; and that views any tendency to disturb ecological balance as crime. It is no doubt that Abbey has a great concern with environmental problems since the ecological worldview is among others meant to answer those problems. Surely, there are a variety of "mediums" of evoking what Abbey evokes in Desert Solitaire but surely Abbey has chosen his own medium at which he is best.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


