

EARTH FIRST!: THE RISE OF ECO-ACTION

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the change in Earth First! praxis elaborated by North Coast Earth First! (in Northern California) from 1985-1990 in order to identify how Judi Bari's theory of "revolutionary ecology" emerged as political force from within a movement founded upon wilderness preservationism and the exclusion of people from nature, creating space for alliances between environmental activists and timber workers to emerge and exposing an emerging politics of encounter underway in the North Coast. Assessments of Earth First! typically focus on its proliferation of direct action interventions against industrial destruction and Judi Bari's leadership in diverging from traditional EF! wilderness preservationism, most notably her attempts to build alliances between EF! activists and timber workers. To date, scholars have failed to assess how the structural formation of EF! as a decentralized anti-authoritarian non-organization has facilitated not only the proliferation of direct action interventions against industrial destruction, but also a highly reflexive radical environmental praxis. I argue that the shift toward what Jonathan London has termed a "post-wilderness environmentalism" was fostered by a "culture of anarchism" combined with an emergent "politics of encounter" operating within the larger Earth First! movement. The thesis elaborates a better

understanding of Earth First! organizational structure, movement agenda, and cognitive praxis, highlighting open membership, oppositional systems of information, insurgent learning spaces, and commitments to anti-authoritarian politics as critical to an innovative radical environmental praxis.

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I owe my love of Nature and desire for sustainability to my parents and grandparents, who gifted me with a childhood of swimming in pristine rivers and lakes, hiking in the mountains, and playing with rainbow trout, salamanders, and frogs.

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PREFACE

Insights into Earth First! in this thesis are largely informed by my own affinity for radical environmental work in the redwoods of Northern California. My relationships with Earth First! and present day forest defenders as well as warriors for justice have generated the networks from which my deepest learning has been informed. My participation in skill shares, direct actions, and several collective popular education sessions from within these networks has facilitated major sites of knowledge production where this research has been mutually informed/informing of understanding of social and environmental struggles in the redwoods.

In addition to my participation in several activities organized by forest defenders, I have also facilitated a number of *coyuntur@s*. *Coyuntur@* means “conjunctural analysis” and is comprised of collective popular education encounters that seek to generate a shared analysis, both historical and present oriented, of the conditions of struggle – political, economic, social, etc. - in any given locale. This method emerges from Latin American social movements and accounts for the particularities of a socio-historic moment in which a social movement finds itself.¹

Coyuntur@ attends to the externalities of social movements, but without the structural bias present in Political Process Theory (PPT). Unlike PPT, *coyuntur@*, does not offer theoretical “causes” for the emergence or success of social movements. Rather,

¹ Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados--México, Servicios Informativos Procesados, “Methodology of Coyuntural Analysis, Notebook #1: The Epistemological Review of Coyuntural Analysis,” 7.

coyuntur@ seeks to generate a shared analysis, from *within* social movement, in order to advance strategic interventions by said movement.²

Bevington and Dixon identify the disjuncture between American social movement theory (primarily based upon PPT) and the movements it seeks to represent as grounds for new theoretical innovations needed within the field. Careful to avoid accusing movement activists of “anti-intellectualism” (which is common within academia) as the primary cause for this disjuncture, they instead point to the irrelevance of PPT to American social movements, noting that it is either inaccurate or obvious to activists. Instead they call for social movement researchers to engage social movements directly so as to generate “movement-relevant theory.” Furthermore, Bevington and Dixon note that activists are “fully capable of developing and elaborating sophisticated theory relevant to the movements in which they are engaged.” They continue, “[F]oremost in generating useful findings is to start by locating the issues and questions of most importance to movement participants.”³ In an effort to generate such “movement-relevant theory,” I have used *coyuntur@* and history-telling as the primary methodologies for this thesis.

In the Spring of 2007, I was invited to facilitate several *coyuntur@s* (in this case, informed by the pending bankruptcy of the Pacific Lumber Company by Maxxam, Inc.)

² For a detailed critique of Political Process Theory see: Jeff Goodwin, James Jasper and Jaswinder Khattri, “Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory,” *Sociological Forum* 14, no. 1 (March, 1999): 27-54.

³ Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon, “Movement-relevant Theory: Rethinking Social Movement Scholarship and Activism,” *Social Movement Studies* 4, no. 3 (December 2005): 197; 198. I want to note that Bevington and Dixon do not include new social movement literature in their review as they note a significant gap between this literature and mainstream American social movement theory. They note that new social movement literature is primarily engaged by cultural studies. My studies within the interdisciplinary Master’s Program in Environment & Community at Humboldt State University have primarily engaged the “newest social movement” literature which is outlined briefly in the introduction, which further explains the lack of attention to PPT in this thesis.

with Mattole Forest Defense movement in Northern California; the Mattole Forest Defense movement being one of the many transformed compositions of North Coast Earth First! as a political force. The *coyuntur@s* consisted of three different sessions which lasted two to four hours each. The purpose of *coyuntur@* is to produce an opportunity for collective reflection in order to generate an informed and innovative strategy for direct action. These *coyuntur@s* provided opportunities for forest defenders to reflect upon current radical environmental struggles in Northern California. Insights gleaned from these sessions inform the conclusion of the thesis.

This thesis is the result of stories. In an effort to avoid objectifying and obscuring people's lives, the primary methodology – in addition to the *coyuntur@s* – is a fusion of oral history and “history-telling” by a handful of North Coast Earth First! activists and those closely associated with them from the redwood region of Northern California.⁴ History-telling is the art of constructing historical narrative and is the interplay between interviewer and interviewee; it recognizes the role/position of the interviewer in influencing the story which is told.⁵ My position as an activist means my work “on the streets” invites stories of resistance which may be otherwise unsaid; at the same time, my position in the academy leaves radical environmental activists – those recently targeted by the Green Scare – leery of sharing information which might eventually land themselves or their comrades in prison.⁶ My efforts to foster open-ended story-telling by

⁴ Anderson and Jack, “Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analysis,” 11-26.

⁵ Portelli, “History-Telling and Time: An Example From Kentucky,” 164-177.

⁶ The Green Scare is the targeting of radical environmental activists, especially from Earth First!, the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front, for prosecution for crimes of “eco-terror.” It has been facilitated by several pieces of legislation which have dramatically increased the penalty for

respecting the art of history-telling, attempt to leave room for the previously unsaid to be said, without prodding, and in doing so, to create space for the counter-narrative to emerge, the story on the other side of the Green Scare, the North Coast story of the struggle for Earth.

It is with great caution, then, that I advance this thesis as both an intellectual project and movement building effort. My goal in acknowledging my engagement with radical environmental activists is to underscore our convergences and our ongoing work as activists/historians. This thesis is also an attempt at “convivial community research.” Insights from history-telling and *coyuntur@s* are juxtaposed to primary textual sources and secondary literature with the hope to elaborate a theoretical framework for reflection that advances today’s struggles in the redwoods and beyond. However, the information produced herein is the product of my own inquiry – informed by, but not fully accountable to Earth First! and forest defenders today. Thus, the thesis falls short of fully achieving a *convivial strategy*. Located somewhere between *Participatory Action Research* - the most prevalent method for inquiry into the sociology of Earth First! – and *militant research*, my hope is that the thesis embodies a more militant than participatory action approach. Manuel Callahan argues that, “Unlike PAR, co-research and militant research approaches generate the objects of study in a context of struggle, refusing to objectify a group for the purposes of knowledge production alone.”⁷

infringement on corporate profit through either sabotage or even picketing and boycotting all of which have been termed “economic terrorism.” See for example: House Committee on the Judiciary, *Acts of Ecoterrorism By Radical Environmental Organizations Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Crime*, 105th Cong., 2nd sess., June 9, 1998): 79.

⁷ Callahan, “Writing Rebellion: The Academic Research Project from a Convivial Approach,” 4-5.

Participatory Action Research emerged as methodology to support development projects in the Third World in such a way as to attempt avoiding further exploiting the communities it sought to “help.” Since the 1990s it has been deployed increasingly through more disciplines, especially in cases of researching under-privileged communities. However, it has been widely criticized for being “participatory” in name only, and failing to advance knowledge production in service of the communities it is dependent upon. Rather, it has been limited to participatory data production, with agenda-setting, interpretation, policy recommendations, and reporting produced by the researchers.⁸

My respect for the significant contributions that Earth First! has already produced with regards to social knowledge of ecology is combined with my profound appreciation for North Coast Earth First!’s interventions and innovations to build a “revolutionary ecology” in Northern California which incorporates humans into the notion and effort of sustainable ecology. This means that rather than try to “prove” or “demonstrate” how Earth First! has contributed to the environmental movement or the dominant knowledge of environmental sciences today, I have attempted to reflect the socio-historic significance of the way North Coast Earth First! organized itself in the struggle for old growth forests and dignified work which remains relevant today.

My attempt at research militancy means that my research unfolded as part of a larger effort to advance forest defense in the Mattole old growth douglas fir forests.

⁸ Rachel Pain and Peter Francis, “Reflections on Participatory Research,” *Area* 35, no. 1 (March 2003): 46-54.

Colectivo Situaciones notes that “research militancy is not the name of the experience of someone who does research but that of the production of (an) *encounter(s)* without *subject(s)* or, if you prefer, of (an) encounter(s) that produce(s) subject(s)?” Militant research, as theorized by Colectivo Situaciones and activists with the Movimiento de Trabajadores Desocupados (MTD) [Movement of Unemployed Workers] of Solano in Argentina, is offered by the *piqueteros* in an effort to both reflect upon the significance of the MTD struggles and with hopes to offer analyses useful to future anti-globalization struggles. Militant research offers a method for self-research within social movement. In this way it breaks with the reification and objectification processes often imposed by the social sciences in Western culture, and instead forges analysis indigenous to the struggle itself.⁹

It is tempting to posit that this thesis is not fully a convivial research project as it is primarily accountable to the university. However, the Autonomous Geographies Collective notes that while the tradition of scholar activism is fraught with tensions between the need to fulfill academic obligations, primarily publishing in academic journals (or in this case producing a master’s thesis), and the time-intensive needs of social movements to act. They observe that this is exacerbated by the “ivory tower syndrome” which “creates [sic] a false distinction between academia and wider society in terms of sites for social struggle and knowledge production.” They propose “academics

⁹ Colectivo Situaciones, “On Method,” (accessed on July 13, 2012).

committed to social change...make strategic interventions collectively with the social movements we belong to.”¹⁰

To that extent, the *coyuntur@s* convened in the Spring of 2007 by myself and the Mattole Forest Defenders at the Mattole Wildlands Skillshare illuminated some of the most pressing concerns and movement problems still faced today in the old growth (in this case Douglas Fir) forests of the North Coast. They are remarkably similar to those of the 1980s. How do we build meaningful relationships between forest defense activists, timber workers, and local Native American tribes in such a way that we are able to collectively change the nature of forestry and develop sustainable forest practices that support dignified life for people-in-nature? This question is still unanswered, but its significance is that it is a collectively elaborated question which emerged both in our preparation for *coyuntur@* and in our engagement in coyuntural analysis. This thesis is my contribution in answering that question, based on my situated analysis of North Coast Earth First!’s tentative alliances with loggers in the 1980s, through the 1990s and expressed in 1999 Seattle. In an effort to “make observable” the questions I have asked, as well as to “construct an archive” to support radical environmental struggles in the future, the stories will be transcribed and archived in local and regional libraries (Humboldt State University, University of California, Davis, and Humboldt County Library) at the discretion of the story-tellers.¹¹

¹⁰ Autonomous Geographies Collective, “Beyond Scholar Activism,” 247.

¹¹ Callahan, “Writing Rebellion: The Academic Research Project from a Convivial Approach,” 4-5; Callahan, “Community Research,” Humboldt State University, Spring 2006.

My hope is that, after reading this, you are reminded of your own power. That you feel inspired to do something wherever you are, with whatever you have, with those you love, for yourself and for your community. As June Jordan said “We are the ones we have been waiting for.”¹²

¹² Jordan, "Poem for South African Women," 43.

INTRODUCTION: TOWARD A POST-WILDERNESS ENVIRONMENTALISM

The 1999 WTO “Battle for Seattle” marked the formal entry of North American resistance into the international foray against transnational corporate tyranny. It also revealed how the “new new social movements” resisted all forms of oppression while simultaneously exercising in the present (or at least attempting to form) the politics, cultures, and social relations imagined for the future.¹³ These new formations of resistance, known as prefigurative politics, compose “global justice networks,” “a series of overlapping, interacting, and differentially placed and resourced networks” whereby “different place-based movements become connected to more spatially extensive coalitions with a shared interest in articulating demands for greater social, economic and environmental justice.”¹⁴ While not explicitly anarchist, today’s resistance struggles operate through “networks of collectives and affinity groups [which] replace unions and federations as the organizational norm.”¹⁵ The anarchistic tendencies of the newest social movements are evidenced by the non-hierarchical and voluntary associations that characterize much of the opposition to transnational corporate tyranny for more than a decade. Decentralized and globally networked resistance has converged at every major international economic summit (G8, WTO, World Bank and FTAA) since 1999, resulting in the halt of WTO policy expansion in 2008.¹⁶

¹³ Day, *Gramsci is Dead*.

¹⁴ Cumbers, “The Entangled Geographies of Global Justice Networks,” 2; see also: Routledge, “Convergence Space: Process Geographies of Grassroots Globalization,” 333-349.

¹⁵ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 5.

¹⁶ James, “Globalization: Leaving the WTO Behind.”

The 1999 street actions in Seattle have been celebrated for the prominent expression of political solidarity of “teamsters and turtles” as environmentalists and labor unions worked together, after nearly two decades of fighting over ancient forests, to block the WTO summit. While the convergence of people from diverse geographies of struggle in Seattle – notably the blue-green alliance illustrated by labor and environmental activists linking arms together - was crucial to its success (and there has been ample reflection upon it), we must not overlook the local and regional socio-historic context in which the “battle” and its new alliances between historic enemies unfolded.¹⁷ The rupture in environmental and labor politics revealed by this “new social chemistry” of “teamsters and turtles” emerged from within a context of bitter hostility and political rivalry between blue-collar workers and environmentalists during the Pacific Northwest Timber Wars.¹⁸ The blue-green alliance so visible in Seattle was forged in the “leaderless” space of non-unionized redwood loggers and anti-authoritarian Earth First! activists on the North Coast.¹⁹

Disillusioned by mainstream environmental politics that consistently compromised habitats and species in the pursuit of political “leverage” in Washington, D.C. a more radical environmental contingent began to ferment, and in 1980 veterans of the mainstream environmental movement formed Earth First! to physically intervene

¹⁷ It should be noted that the original broadsheet invitation to shut down the WTO negotiations in 1999 Seattle was circulated through the *Earth First! Journal* and that EF! contributed critical knowledge and skills about blockading during the WTO protests. Stephanie Guilloud (organizer, Seattle WTO Shut Down) in discussion with the author, June 2012. There are several anthologies of reflections on the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle see: Danaher, *Globalize This!*; and Solnit, *Globalize Liberation*.

¹⁸ Midnight Notes Collective, *Auroras of the Zapatistas*, 14.

¹⁹ Richard Widick directly links the efforts for blue-green alliances in Seattle with the work in Northern California, see Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 18-19.

against ecological destruction at the point of extraction.²⁰ While radical in the sense that Earth First! founders declared their position to be one of “no compromise in defense of Earth,” their assumptions about wilderness and civilization as mutually exclusive contributed to “widening tensions between the requirements of ecology and production...and between production and reproduction.”²¹ These tensions eventually forced a shift in radical environmental politics as North Coast Earth First! moved toward a “post-wilderness environmentalism,” a radical environmentalism which Jonathan London defines as going “beyond the traditional nature-culture dichotomy and confront[ing] capital’s dual exploitation of natural and human communities.”²²

Toward a Post-Wilderness Environmentalism

In shifting to the local, this thesis examines the trans/formation of Earth First!, an important network of ecological resistance struggles within the alter-globalization movement. By innovating image politics which visually link human bodies with non-human well-being Earth First!, broadens our “environmental imagination” beyond traditional political venues confronting industrial destruction at the “points of extraction, production, and distribution.”²³ EF! elaborates a political practice based on spiritual relationships to non-human entities and encourages people to reflect on deeper connections to nature outside a bourgeois aesthetic, inviting action in alignment with

²⁰ Manes, *Green Rage*, 45-65.

²¹ Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 5, quoted in Foster, 17.

²² London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 160.

²³ Regarding image politics see: DeLuca, *Image Politics*; Mark Dowie coined the term “environmental imagination” in his seminal text *Losing Ground*; and Silvaggio details the expansion of Earth First! resistance at the “points of extraction, production, and distribution” in his dissertation “The Forest Defense Movement, 1980-2005.”

those values.²⁴ By denying the exclusive utility of wilderness for human purposes, and insisting upon its inherent value, EF! challenges mainstream preservation/conservation groups to examine the meaning of their own industrial lives in relation to the wild they supposedly work to protect, framing political compromises as deals that broker extinction of species and place.

In particular this thesis traces the transformation of radical environmental praxis within North Coast Earth First!, a collective based on the North Coast of California from 1985 until the early 2000s, today better known as Forest Defense. Earth First! activists have claimed some responsibility for the events in Seattle, and have noted that “Without both the “no compromise” ideals and the blockading technology, the [WTO] delegates would have busted through the lines, and once again international capital would have won the day.”²⁵ This thesis narrates (loosely) the history behind these statements. The purpose is not to explain the origins of the Seattle convergence, but rather to situate it within a region composed of local victories in resistance to corporate globalization. 1999 Seattle was celebrated globally for its resistance to transnational greed and its broad spectrum of support reveals the significant force of post-issue activism increasingly generated in the forest defense and labor movements throughout the Pacific Northwest, despite the friction and violence between resource workers and environmental activists

²⁴ Taylor, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I)” and “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II).”

²⁵ Pri Mitivist, “The Urbanization of Earth First!,” 98-99.

for most of the 1980s and 1990s during the Timber Wars (the political economy of the Timber Wars will be elaborated in Chapter 1).²⁶

The collaboration of “teamsters and turtles” in 1999 Seattle occurred in spite of Earth First!’s historic and ideological foundation in strict wilderness preservationism. Critics argue that overwhelming emphasis on wilderness/nature as purely non-human fosters a “fundamentalist ecology” formed by a combination of misanthropic, misogynistic, and Euro-centric tendencies which have undermined Earth First!’s ability to build alliances across difference, especially racial and socio-economic differences, severely limiting the capacity to end ecological industrial destruction.²⁷ This thesis highlights how, eventually, internal opposition, especially from North Coast Earth First!, emerged to displace the prominence of “fundamentalist ecology” within Earth First!, through the emergence of a “post-wilderness environmentalism.”²⁸ In fact, NCEF! was so successful in brokering blue-green alliances and challenging industrial timber hegemony, that it heralded a transformation in radical environmental praxis of the larger environmental movement (including its mainstream and radical elements) as evidenced by the blue-green alliances prominent in 1999 Seattle.

I argue that the socio-political space to overcome the historic antagonisms between loggers and environmental activists was fostered by the political culture of anarchism operating within Earth First! since its formation in 1980.²⁹ We can see the

²⁶ Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 18-19. For more on post-issue activism see: Reinsborough, “Decolonizing The Revolutionary Imagination,” 161-216.

²⁷ Shantz, “Scarcity and the Emergence of Fundamentalist Ecology,” 144-154.

²⁸ London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 155-176.

²⁹ My understanding of “political culture of anarchism” comes from: Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 11-27.

prefigurative nature of Earth First! practice in its emergent “politics of encounter” expressed through the convening of base camps to support direct actions and annual gatherings at Round River Rendezvous. Manuel Callahan argues that these “spaces of encounter” are animated by “insurgent systems of learning and knowledge production” which generated reflexive movement praxis.³⁰ The anti-authoritarian commitments of the non-organization prevented movement stagnation and lent support to an insurgent moral authority asserted by North Coast Earth First! leadership and articulated by Judi Bari’s theory of “revolutionary ecology.”³¹

The critical social, cultural, political, and theoretical work which built positive relationships between blue-green adversaries in Northern California where they have been fundamentally at odds for more than one hundred years - forms the material background of this thesis. I argue that the socio-political space to shift from a “wilderness fundamentalism” to a “post-wilderness environmentalism” was fostered by the culture of anarchism (diffused systems of power, leadership, research, open membership, prefigurative politics and insurgent learning) operating within the Earth First! branch of the radical environmental movement since its formation in 1980.

Furthermore, Earth First! expressed this culture of anarchism through an emergent “politics of encounter” in an attempt to invite those concerned with the protection of the Earth to see not only one another, but the wild they wish to protect on ecocentric terms. Borrowing from Manuel Callahan’s reading of the Zapatista rebels in South Mexico, I

³⁰ Manuel Callahan, in conversation and by e-mail message to author, June 21, 2012.

³¹ Bari, “Revolutionary Ecology.”

note that the spaces for encounter – such as the annual Round River Rendezvous – convened by Earth First! are animated by “systems of insurgent learning and knowledge production” which create opportunities for movement reflection and innovation of radical environmental theory and praxis. In short, by creating opportunities for activists to come together in non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian gatherings, combined with the use of grassroots skillshares and a movement publication (*Earth First! Journal*), Earth First! generated a dynamic learning environment where situated knowledge and on-the-ground research was respected and could quickly be incorporated into new movement practices.³²

The spaces for encounter generated by Earth First! produced a movement culture capable of broader collective action frame diffusion. In this context, North Coast Earth First! was able to successfully adapt environmental philosophy to include anti-capitalist and worker struggles. The thesis examines the dynamic internal framing disputes between Earth First! founders, the theory of deep ecology and North Coast Earth First! leadership, and Judi Bari’s theory of revolutionary ecology, in order to better understand how the organizational flexibility within Earth First! evolved to support a broader anti-capitalist struggles including struggles against ecological destruction.

Furthermore, this culture of anarchism encouraged organizational flexibility within Earth First! creating political space for the emergence of Judi Bari’s theory of revolutionary ecology, which offered a broader interpretive scope of the root problem of environmental destruction. Rather, than relying solely on the nearsighted view that

³² Callahan, “Rebel Pedagogy: Zapatismo and Insurgent Learning.”

resource workers are responsible for ecological destruction, revolutionary ecology linked the fate of the forest to the fate of the workers, insisting that the same corporate greed responsible for clearcut devastation was also the cause of the high unemployment and poverty in timber country. This in turn, eventually appealed to a larger sector of potential adherents in Northern California, where North Coast Earth First! was working to stop logging of old growth redwoods. The culture of anarchism within Earth First! supported a productive reframing of forest issues which supported the formation of the blue-green alliance prominent in 1999 Seattle.³³

In Chapter One, “Timber Wars” I explore the social, political, and economic conjuncture of the 1970s and 1980s which contextualized the formation of Earth First!. I note the rise of de-industrialization within timber communities as corporate consolidations and technological innovations downsized timber workforces and outsourced timber production. I also note the political ineffectiveness of the biggest Environmental Movement Organizations, most notably the Sierra Club and Wilderness Society, in ensuring environmental protections or even sustainability for the last wilderness areas in the United States (failure of RARE II). I explore the rise of a new school of eco-philosophy deep ecology, which called for a cultural transformation away from industrial values, as these were responsible for ecological destruction in the first place. Finally, I highlight the rise of the “jobs v. environment” paradigm and the contributions to this fiery formulation by both the environmental movement (who blamed

³³ Robert Benford and David Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (August, 2000): 611-639.

resource workers for environmental destruction) and the timber industry propagandists (who blamed the spotted owl for job loss).

In Chapter Two “Earth First: The Rise of Eco-Action” I review the emergence of Earth First! as a significant force in the American environmental movement, challenging industrial supremacy and insisting upon the inherent value of Earth (non-humans) demonstrated by an ethos of direct action. Assessments of Earth First! have primarily focused on its strategic and tactical divergence from mainstream environmentalism, its earthen-spirituality, and its use of direct action.³⁴ However, scholars have failed to notice how the structural formation of Earth First! as nonorganizational, from its inception, incorporated strategic decisions about power and organization in order to avoid taking “on the organization of the industrial state,” and thereby its “anthropocentric paradigm” and repressive tendencies, leaving space for internal dissent, dialogue, and innovation, such as that offered by NCEF!.³⁵ I note how Earth First! as a movement was able to grow exponentially and toward multiple geographies in the 1980s, due in large part to its anarchist culture, i.e. diffused systems of power, disdain for movement figureheads, grassroots research, open membership (no dues, no formalities), horizontal organization, and generation of prefigurative politics.

Chapter Two explores Earth First!’s generation of a prefigurative politics as part of an emergent “politics of encounter.” I argue that Earth First!’s strategic convening of

³⁴ Regarding Earth First! spirituality see: Taylor, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I),” 175-193; Taylor, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II),” 226; Short, “Earth First! and the Rhetoric of Moral Confrontation,” 172-188; and Lee, *Earth First!*. For detailed history of Earth First! see: Manes *Green Rage*; Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*; Ingalsbee, “Earth First! Activism,” 263-276; Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*; Coleman, *The Secret Wars of Judi Bari*; Harris, *The Last Stand*; and Lee, *Earth First!*.

³⁵ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 21.

annual movement gatherings at Round River Rendezvous combined with the use of base camps, reveals an emergent “politics of encounter.” According to Earth First! founder Mike Roselle, Round River Rendezvous were established not only to provide Earth First!ers with opportunities to engage one another, but they are held outdoors usually to ensure movement engagement with Nature. By hosting their annual gatherings in the wilderness, Earth First! demonstrated a prefigurative ethos, and necessarily incorporated strategies and practices for living more simply into movement forums including alternative methods for toileting, cooking, and building shelter.³⁶

I highlight how Earth First!’s use of encounters and systems of insurgent learning and knowledge production embodies its elaboration of a prefigurative politics (doing today that which participants wish to see in the future) and demonstrates a political culture of anarchism operating within the movement. Combined, these elements created and maintained socio-political space for internal dissent from leadership within NCEF!, generating movement dialogue and theoretical innovation, most notably articulated by Judi Bari in her theory of “revolutionary ecology.”³⁷

In Chapter Three, “North Coast Earth First!: The Impact of Revolutionary Ecology,” I demonstrate how North Coast Earth First! utilized EF! encounters in conjunction with “systems of insurgent learning and knowledge production” through base camps and skill-shares to facilitate intra-movement communication and learning, thereby

³⁶ Roselle, *Tree-Spiker*, 53.

³⁷ Throughout this thesis references to Earth First! means the larger network/movement of Earth First!, North Coast Earth First! is used to refer to the particular local formation of Earth First! within northern California. References to Earth First!ers is to Earth First! activists from NCEF! as well as different parts of the larger EF! movement, as within EF! activists refer to themselves as EF!ers, rather than a localized version of a particular EF! formation.

creating opportunities for new activists to engage in direct action and participate in movement leadership. By examining the formation, emergence, and legacy of Judi Bari's theory of "revolutionary ecology," I show how NCEF! leadership engaged the EF! system for insurgent learning and knowledge production and embraced organizing strategies based on dialogue and engagement with local people and place. By insisting on a code of non-violent direct action, NCEF! facilitated the construction of positive exchanges between EF!ers and loggers, even in the midst of immense hostility, and successfully produced a shift in radical environmental politics, attempting to transcend "wilderness preservationism" by calling for a localized restoration economy and sustainable forestry project based in the Headwaters Forest. Jonathan London argues that by linking timber worker and redwood forest interests a "post-wilderness environmentalism" emerged in Northern California, forging an end to the Timber Wars of the 1980s.³⁸

In Chapter Four "Redwood Summer: From Ecotage to Mass Movement," I review how NCEF! amplified EF!'s ethos of direct action through the articulation of Redwood Summer as mass civil disobedience in the redwoods, for the redwoods. By calling for thousands to converge on the redwood forest to protest Maxxam's escalation in logging of old growth redwoods, NCEF! pushed the limits of EF!'s direct action strategy in a direction already pioneered by the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, but new to the environmental movement. Given this shift toward mass social movement, I argue that the use of music became increasingly useful to NCEF! as an "open system for insurgent

³⁸ London, "Common Roots and Entangled Limbs," 155-176.

information” to communicate the relationship between the plight of the timber workers and the destruction of the old growth forests. Furthermore, as the two key movement organizers, Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney were bombed in May 1990 just before Redwood Summer, the ability of the rest of EF! to forge on without their involvement demonstrates the significant extent of decentralized leadership fostered by the movement’s commitments to an anti-authoritarian politics and ethos of do-it-yourself direct action.³⁹

In conclusion I summarize how, for a time, NCEF! successfully exposed and managed fundamentalist tendencies within EF!, catalyzing alternative movement formations capable of organizing mass resistance to ecological destruction, and supporting the 1999 insurrection in Seattle, by building alliances with blue-collar workers throughout the Pacific Northwest and building resistance to industrial destruction. Despite continued repression, we can see the legacy of Seattle in the buttressing of local resistance, and the activists’ lived experiences of mass rebellion proliferating resistance. I note that the question of how to generate blue-green alliances in the redwoods in the 1980s and 1990s continues to be relevant today to the forest defense efforts on the North Coast. I suggest that this thesis may be useful in a collective construction of answers to this question by offering a look at the emergent “revolutionary ecology” in the redwoods in the 1980s and 1990s.

³⁹ I am indebted to the idea of “open system of insurgent information” to Manuel Callahan during numerous conversations between the Fall of 2005 and June 2012.

CHAPTER 1 “TIMBER WARS”

In an effort to save what remained of the old-growth forests the [northern spotted owl] needed to survive, radical environmentalists pounded steel or ceramic spikes into firs, which threatened to destroy chain saws and mill blades. They donned tree costumes to attract attention to their cause and crawled into tree platforms to disrupt logging. Counter-protests erupted. In angry mill towns, café owners provocatively served "spotted owl soup" and shops sold T-shirts and bumper stickers ("Save a Logger, Eat an Owl").⁴⁰

Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s the Timber Wars of the Pacific Northwest raged between environmentalists and blue collar workers in “timber country” over harvesting the last old growth conifer forests. The war marked a dramatic shift in the region’s character as the de-industrialization of the logging community marked higher rates of unemployment and poverty. This chapter explores the political and economic conjuncture of the American West in the 1970s and 1980s that contextualized the formation of Earth First! and in particular, the emergence of North Coast Earth First!.

The typical timber narrative of lumber companies in the Pacific Northwest starts with the hardworking immigrant, who through perseverance and innovation is able to build a business and eventually establish a company town where they can care for their employees and build the American Dream. Arriving migrant timber workers stay on in the company towns and establish families, converting what were once remote territories of the United States into colonies of hardworking people trying to make a living for themselves and their families. The rugged timber man becomes the hardworking father.

⁴⁰ Welch, “The Spotted Owl’s New Nemesis.”

The regional economy is built on the logging of ancient forests and local identity is forged through colonization. The transformation of forests into timber becomes a way of life.⁴¹

Felice Pace notes that the political economy of timber communities is centered upon timber production. The timber elite sit on the boards of all prominent institutions, i.e. schools, hospitals, etc. Power flows through timber elite and jobs/resources are bestowed upon timber supporters and withheld from timber opponents. In addition, for most rural timber communities, County revenues for schools and other public services is primarily derived from timber production, either as a percentage of sales or as a per acre tax. This means that public education, County roads, and other infrastructure is literally financed by timber production, adding a financial incentive to governments who might otherwise find it in the common good to oppose clearcuts and aerial herbicide sprays. Furthermore, Pace notes that the sociology of timber communities operates in such a way that the hazardous aspects of forest work such as, “loss of limb, lifetime disabilities, or death” is “transformed into challenge, excitement, and nobility. Young men eagerly followed their fathers into this work and the women stood by their men through good times and bad.”⁴²

⁴¹ Dietrich, *The Final Forest*, 281-290; London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 158. For a detailed account of the impacts of capitalist colonization of Humboldt Bay see: Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 175-223. Also, “timber country” refers to communities which formed with the timber industry and whose identities, cultures and economies are dependent upon it for survival. See: Brown, *In Timber Country*.

⁴² Felice Pace, “Cultural Clearcuts: The Sociology of Timber Communities in the Pacific Northwest,” in *Clearcut: The Tragedy of Industrial Forestry*, ed. Bill Devall (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books/Earth Island Press, 1993), 41.

Before the national controversy over the northern spotted owl and the Timber Wars of the 1980s and 1990s, the post-WWII domestic housing boom and enhanced foreign markets for US wood products (resulting in large part from international development projects and structural adjustment programs) placed a heavy demand on already depleted US forests. By the 1970s, private supplies of old growth forests in the US had been virtually wiped out and the corporate timber industry turned to public forests to meet the domestic and international demand for timber.⁴³

Through mergers and takeovers, neoliberal structural adjustments to the timber industry led to consolidation of corporations. As the timber industry responded to the neoliberal reforms and market liberalization of the 1980s, small, local, and financially stable logging companies were raided by recently established transnational corporations designed to profit from leveraged buyouts. Corporate takeovers, in turn accelerated the rates of clear-cutting and milling made possible through modernization of equipment and labor reduction. As a result, company towns were dismantled, jobs were eliminated as workforces were downsized, and the fragile habitats of spotted owls, marbled murrelets, bald eagles, and wild salmon were savagely destroyed.⁴⁴

As timber pressures mounted, the US Forest Service (USFS) conducted their first (of two) Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) of 56 million acres of federal lands. The USFS's recon looked to establish a few preserves and open the rest to

⁴³ Durbin, *Tree Huggers*, 22. Of course there were exceptions to the depletion of old growth forests. Most notably for the purposes of this study, the Pacific Lumber Company maintained a competitive advantage due to their relatively "sustainable" rate of cutting their private supply of redwoods.

⁴⁴ Zey, *Banking on Fraud*, 147; Foster, "The Limits of Environmentalism Without Class," 11-41; Bari, "Timber Wars" *Industrial Worker* (October, 1989), reprinted in *Timber Wars* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 1994), 15; Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 13-15.

logging, mining and cattle grazing. In 1972 the USFS concluded the RARE process and set aside a mere 12.3 million acres for study. The USFS made 43.7 million acres open to logging. Concerned about the forest crises in the US and its implications for diminished wildlife habitat, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society appealed the decision based on the National Environmental Policy Act. A federal judge granted an injunction, and required the USFS to execute environmental impact reviews of the areas to be logged. The Sierra Club and Wilderness Society also used NEPA to insure public comment during the process.⁴⁵

In 1977 Jimmy Carter, who ran an environmental platform, appointed Rupert Cutler, former executive for the Wilderness Society, assistant agriculture secretary to the administration. As assistant agriculture secretary Cutler had full control of RARE II. Conservation advocates breathed a sigh of relief, believing that with one of their own overseeing the project, RARE II would accomplish significant wilderness preservation.⁴⁶ In 1979 Cutler's USFS conceded to pressures from the timber, mining, and cattle industries, sidelining environmental science and public comment. Overseeing 190 million acres of National Forests with 80 million acres considered roadless and undeveloped, "the Department of Agriculture recommended that only 15 million receive protection from road building and timber cutting."⁴⁷ Disillusioned by this major setback for conservation, a small band of activists from the Wilderness Society, Sierra Club, and other mainstream environmental movement organizations, came together in the Pinacate

⁴⁵ Durbin, *Tree Huggers*, 32-33; 56-57.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

⁴⁷ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 13.

Desert and committed to placing “the health of the Earth” in any decision.⁴⁸ Their collective commitment formed Earth First!, an anti-authoritarian, non-organization which emerged at the center of a growing transnational direct action (physical intervention against industrial destruction) radical environmental movement.⁴⁹

In 1979 the US Forest Service concluded RARE II after considerable negotiations between the US Forest Service, industry, and major Environmental Movement Organizations (EMOs). Refusing to designate forest as wilderness areas, effectively the USFS gave the resource industry access to forty-seven million acres of public lands and resources. Not only was this ecologically destructive, but the economic benefits were not clear. In addition to allowing access to, and extraction of, public resources at below market value the state subsidized the economic (not to mention the environmental) costs of cattle grazing and logging by spending more than it receives in fees to maintain the areas for resource industries.⁵⁰

As the mainstream environmental movement proved itself increasingly ineffective in stopping industrial destruction, i.e. widespread and prevalent violations of all the major environmental victories – Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, – some people began calling for a deeper, longer-term, cultural transformation to end industrial destruction. Recognizing that there was no voice for the natural world, the radical environmental movement formed outside the traditional political venues, tapping into the back-to-the-land and cultural revolutions of the 1960s.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 72; 100.

Deep Ecology & Radical Environmental Movement

In the 1970s, as Western science etched global “limits to growth” into public discourse in the US and Europe, Norwegian philosopher and mountaineer, Arne Naess distinguished between the “shallow” reform-oriented (mainstream) and the “deep, long-range” (radical) ecology movements.⁵¹ He argued that the “deep ecology movement” had to work toward more than material remedies to global crises and instead must bring about a paradigm shift to stop the core processes that had produced the crises in the first place. The tenets of deep ecology called for the “rejection of man in environment image in favour of the relational, total field image,” Naess argued for a “biospherical egalitarianism” in which Life is sacred. By “relational, total field image” Naess meant that any-thing cannot be that “thing” by itself, it is only what it is in relation to what is around it – what it relates to, i.e. no-thing, or person for that matter, exists in isolation. Furthermore, “biospherical egalitarianism” insists on the extension of value for life beyond only human life. All life is sacred and should be treated with the utmost respect.⁵² Finally, Naess argued for local autonomy and decentralization because locality decreases pollution and energy consumption.⁵³ While not original, Naess’ theory of ecology offers a radical break from Western hegemony and the “great chain of being” which positioned

⁵¹ The “Doomsday Decade” as the 1970s came to be known, focused environmental discourse on the pending ecological apocalypse which established man/civilization as “a global ecological force” and set requisite limits for economic and human population expansion in order to avoid global ecological collapse. See: Dryzek and Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth*, 7-9; Holdren and Ehrlich, “Human Population and the Global Environment,” 282-292; and Holdren, “Man as a Global Ecological Force.” Regarding deep ecology see: Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement,” 343-347.

⁵² Naess, “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement,” 343.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 345.

humans as the pinnacle of Darwin's evolution by "survival of the fittest."⁵⁴ Earth First! founder, Dave Foreman would later identify deep ecology as the "mythology" of the movement.⁵⁵

Deep ecology emerged as an alternative to a mainstream environmental politics, which had proven incapable of ending industrial destruction. Despite the creation of the Environmental Protection Agency and its mandates to protect air and water, ecological destruction accelerated throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, the deep ecology movement was not without its limitations.

Timothy Luke argues that deep ecology wants to overturn enlightenment "rationality" and return society to a "reenchanted world" where the natural and supranatural are inseparable and the primal mind is divine.⁵⁶ Luke notes that deep ecology's "dialectic of rechantment" is problematic when challenging industrial supremacy on two levels: 1) by flipping "rationality" rather than challenging the process of individuation and mathematic equalization which it requires, the alienating individualism of the European Enlightenment (which birthed industrial culture) is left intact; and 2) by essentializing "primal knowledge," deep ecology reifies and homogenizes distinct indigenous ways of knowing.⁵⁷ In this way, Deep Ecologists appropriate Native American spiritual practices and traditions for the utility of the

⁵⁴ Judi Bari notes that Naess' "biospherical egalitarianism" is not original in the sense that many non-Western cultures have maintained and insisted upon inherent value of, and human interdependence with, "nature" as well as federated/decentralized political/community structures. See: Bari, "Revolutionary Ecology."

⁵⁵ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 175.

⁵⁶ Luke, *Ecocritique*, 8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-15

wilderness preservation project, an inherently Euro-centric “racial formation.”⁵⁸

Ramachandra Guha notes that the violence of this dialectic is that it romanticizes “primal” peoples while dislocating indigenous people by appropriating natural commons as wilderness preserves for individual “enlightenment” experiences.⁵⁹ The internal tensions generated by concepts of deep ecology within the Earth First! movement will be discussed in Chapter Two.

Early formations of radical environmental organizations, such as Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, tended toward small cells of uncompromising activists dedicated to endangered species preservation (most notably whales and other ocean mammals) and stopping nuclear use and testing. Campaigns, such as those by Greenpeace, to stop whaling in international waters forced radical environmentalists to formulate new strategies because traditional lobbying would have been inefficient and insufficient to ensure the whales’ survival. These activists had to produce and appeal to a “global” subject in order to generate transnational anti-whaling policies. Breaking with the traditional reform-oriented environmental movement, Greenpeace activists staged daring image events through direct action interventions against whaling expeditions, attracting international media attention and forcing whaling into the public spotlight. The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society went even further and buttressed direct action with

⁵⁸ Deloria, “Is Religion Possible?,” 35-39. Also, Michel Omi and Howard Winant define “racial formation” as that which “emphasizes the social nature of race, the absence of any essential racial characteristics, the historical flexibility of racial meaning and categories, the conflictual character of race at both the “micro” and “macro-social” levels, and the irreducible political aspect of racial dynamics.” For more see: Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 4.

⁵⁹ Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation,” 71-83. For more on the relationship between environmentalism and spiritual appropriation see: Smith, *Conquest*, 55-78; 119-135. and Deloria, “Is Religion Possible?,” 37.

“ecotage” (sabotage of environmentally destructive industrial equipment) in order to buy time for the whales and to increase financial cost to the whaling industry (their sabotage of a major whale meat processing center in Iceland also garnered widespread international media attention and exposed the lie of “research” whaling). Images of Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society obstructing the operations of whaling fleets (imagine very small dinghies with 2-3 people on board “playing chicken” with titanic freighter-sized whaling ships) put whaling on the international agenda in the 1970s. By 1986 the International Whaling Commission banned whaling.⁶⁰

Increasingly, as the scope of environmental destruction expanded, radical environmental cells began incorporating more direct action and ecotage into their political repertoire. These last-ditch efforts to stop industrial destruction also marked a new emphasis of refusing any compromise. In addition to an expanded more sophisticated direct action, these eco-warriors strategically deployed an “image politics” whereby they mobilized the mass media by “staging” “image events” – daring eco-actions – which captivated the attention of reporters and the public alike. Designed to bring to light “hidden” ecological destruction, radical environmental image events offered alternative and ecocentric paradigms for public engagement. The success of direct action political strategy and strategic image events expanded the scope of environmental sympathizers and invited new eco-warriors to emerge. The variety of tactics deployed by radical environmental activists and made visible through their use of “image politics,” worked to broaden the public sphere for environmental debate and

⁶⁰ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 1-5, 51-54; Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 47-56; 187-200.

generate extra-legal pressure on governments otherwise resistant to counter-industrial policies.⁶¹

Robert Benford and David Snow contend that collective action framing has become an increasingly “central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements.”⁶² They note that frames render events meaningful, organize experiences, and guide actions. In this sense deep ecology offered a new “diagnostic frame” identifying the root problem of ecological destruction as a product of industrial culture, rather than merely an issue of poor policy and regulation. The radical environmental direct action movement offered a new “prognostic frame” by refusing compromise and acting outside traditional political venues activists identified alternative (to political lobbying and membership financial mobilization) strategies for literally stopping environmental destruction at the point of extraction. Finally, the deployment of strategic image events, as Earth First! activist and writer Chris Manes has explained, expanded “the universe of thinkable thoughts.”⁶³ In this sense, image events offer a tactic for “motivational framing” at the same time that they deploy a strategy for at least temporarily stopping industrial destruction. Benford and Snow are careful to note that the frame processes of development, generation, and elaboration are overlapping, discursive, strategic, and contested.⁶⁴ I would add that the formation of diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation frames are similarly entwined. Furthermore, with respect to the use of image events for framing purposes, there is also the added utility of direct

⁶¹ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 1-22.

⁶² Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 623.

⁶³ Manes, *Green Rage*, 77.

⁶⁴ Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 622.

action influencing and sculpting activist identity and the collective identity of movement actors.

While the formation of a collective activist identity is beneficial in that it contributes to shared values, trust, political investment, and commitment to long-term social movement organizing, it has the unfortunate side effect of also generating “insiders” and “outsiders.” This insider/outsider dichotomy limits the pool of what Benford and Snow term “potential adherents” and inherently produces direct opponents. In the case of environmental movement, historically, this has especially barred the formation of broader alliances with people of color and workers to stop industrial destruction. This in turn provided fertile ground for the timber industry to engage in “adversarial framing,” which Benford and Snow note is a “related attributional process [sic] that seeks to delineate the boundaries between “good” and “evil.””⁶⁵

Jobs v. Environment

As environmentalists escalated their campaigns to disrupt industrial logging, timber corporations increasingly replaced skilled timber workers with inexperienced labor in the mills and forests, pitting loggers against activists by sub-contracting logging out to “gyppo loggers” at piece-rate pay. Gyppo loggers own their equipment and contract with timber corporations to log the old growth forests. When skilled timber fellers worked for the big corporations that owned/leased the forests being logged and also the mills processing the logs they were paid high hourly rates, however in response

⁶⁵ Ibid., 616.

to logging blockades the timber industry began to shift toward sub-contracting in order to shift the cost of environmental intervention onto the workers.

During the Timber Wars, gyppo-loggers came to divide workers much like scabs undermine strikers. Throughout the 1980s corporate timber consolidation, technological innovations and exporting of raw logs for processing elsewhere led to significant downsizing of the timber workforce. Indirectly, this contributed to an increase in the need for seasonal contractors for logging, known as gyppo-loggers. Furthermore, by relying on contracted timber fellers, corporations were able to externalize the cost of delays in logging operations. Rather than paying loggers by the hour while a blockade is in effect by activists, the corporation now only pays by the old growth logged, therefore, although the blockade does delay profit, it does not cost the company's payroll. Contracted gyppo-loggers, being paid only for what they can log, in turn direct their anger and frustration at being low paid and exploited, onto activists who are literally standing between them and their paycheck.⁶⁶

Logger deprivations during the Timber Wars were reminiscent of the late 19th and early 20th centuries including extended workdays, intimidation, injury, and death. The industrial shift to gyppo logging sheltered the timber corporations from having to pay

⁶⁶ Harris, *The Last Stand*, 132-133; and Bari, *Timber Wars*, 25-42; 72. I want to also note that the use of contract pay has been implemented by the timber industry nearly since its inception in the Pacific Northwest as a means to undermine worker organization and trade unionism, see: Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 198. I am grateful to Manuel Callahan for brining my attention to the historic role of gyppo loggers in opposition to the larger timber firms. Farnsworth notes that historically gyppo-loggers have been viewed positively for the "economic autonomy which individuals could assert." However, gyppo loggers have rarely logged redwoods primarily due to the early consolidation of redwood ownership and redwood transportation infrastructure by the larger timber firms in the early 19th century. Gyppo logging of redwood trees was not prevalent until the 1980s after Maxxam took over the Pacific Lumber Company. See: Farnsworth, "Gyppo Logging in Humboldt County," 4; 64; 89; 99-102.

worker's compensation or unemployment benefits. These deprivations combined with high rates of unemployment have been linked to increased violence throughout the region. Industrial logging has left a legacy of soil erosion, watershed deterioration, declining wild salmon populations, species extinction, and increasing rates of unemployment, poverty, and cancer across the Pacific Northwest.⁶⁷

Faced with drastically decreased forests, a surplus workforce, under-funded municipalities, and the liability of increasing endangered species in the region, but buoyed by the environmental rollbacks of the Reagan administration, the timber industry set to work to take their so-called "lemons" and make proverbial "lemonade." Armed with a buffet of graphs and pie charts timber experts reframed the debate, declared bountiful forests still stood, but the spotted owl and environmentalists were standing in the way of profitable logging. The timber industry successfully deployed "adversarial framing" and in a public relations coup, the tiny owl and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) became responsible for unemployment and economic recession in the 1980s.⁶⁸

The ESA is considered to be the most comprehensive environmental legislation ever passed in the United States because it allows the health of a single species to have legal standing in federal and state environmental impact review processes. Endangered

⁶⁷ Regarding timber working conditions see: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Fatal occupational injuries, employment, and rates of fatal occupational injuries by selected worker characteristics, occupations, and industries, 2007," 2; Harris, *The Last Stand*, 131; Bari, *Timber Wars*, 109-117; Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 24; Onstine, *The Great Strike of Humboldt County 1935*, 22. Regarding regional violence see: Hoover and Johnson, "Identity Driven Violence," 89-90. Regarding industrial timber legacy see: Jensen and Draffan, *Strangely Like War*, 30; McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem*, 48; Dietrich, *The Final Forest*, 246-247; Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 254; Pace, "Clearcut," 41-45.

⁶⁸ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 13; Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement*, 10, 38; Rose, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide*, 40-41; Dietrich, *The Final Forest*, 25; Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 82. For a detailed account of timber industry propaganda and the "battle for public perception" see: Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 233; 239-245.

species are indicative of overall poor health within an eco-system and bring legal standing to environmental interventions against poor industrial practices. Unprepared for such widespread anti-environmental backlash, the mainstream environmental movement responded in defense of its landmark policy with its traditional strategies and tactics: membership sales were increased, reports were compiled, legal injunctions were filed and public officials were lobbied to enforce state and federal forestry standards.

Environmental experts refuted industry research with inverted statistics decrying the extinction of endangered species and demonstrating the ability of “science” to prove opposite sides of the same coin: nature as resource. Mainstream environmental campaigns proceeded without consideration for logging families displaced by habitat conservation, further fanning conflict between environmentalists and timber workers throughout the Pacific Northwest.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, as the courts weighed the opposing sets of evidence, forest ecosystems were destroyed and lost forever.

⁶⁹ Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement*, 55-56; and Dietrich, *The Final Forest*, 24; 73. For the purposes of this thesis I use mainstream environmentalism to refer to its particular formations in the United States where it emerged from the wilderness preservation/conservation tradition and is primarily organized as non-governmental organizations functioning as non-profit and not for profit corporations who, as interest groups, lobby local, state, and federal agencies and elected officials to implement and maintain preservation/conservation policies and also purchase land for preservation/conservation. Although, environmental justice work has become increasingly institutional and bureaucratized, I do not include it in the scope of mainstream environmentalism, largely because the movement positions itself outside of and often in opposition to mainstream environmentalism. See: Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*; Dryzek and Schlosberg, *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*; and Foster, “The Limits of Environmentalism Without Class,” 11-15.

CHAPTER 2 EARTH FIRST!: THE RISE OF ECO-ACTION

In the case of public lands preservation, environmentalists had the moral and economic high ground, but still lost. The encounter with RARE II and its environmentally unfavorable conclusion left many activists bitter and looking for new venues for wilderness preservation. The duplicity of major EMOs, in particular the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club, in not only brokering RARE II and pressuring grassroots activists *not* to appeal the decision was extremely disappointing to the movement. Earth First! emerged from frustrations with mainstream environmentalism and its capitulation to industry interests during the process and conclusion of RARE II.⁷⁰

Founder Dave Foreman attributes inspiration for Earth First! to the controversial anarchist, preservationist and novelist, Edward Abbey who, in 1975, published *The Monkeywrench Gang*, which chronicled the adventures of a band of young American “monkeywrenchers” whose mission was to sabotage industrial development projects across the United States. The book became a bestseller and it was only a matter of time before its fiction inspired Earth First! eco-action on the industrial frontier.⁷¹

A summary of the successes of Earth First! in its initial formation highlights its snowball effect. The first annual Round River Rendezvous was held on Independence Day in 1980 to remind the so-called wise-use Sagebrush Rebellion who the “real

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13-14. I want to note that however disappointing the RARE II process may have been to conservationists working on it, the compromises between corporate and environmental interests are in keeping with the tradition of wilderness preservation from its earliest inception. See: DeLuca, “Trains in the Wilderness,” 633-652.

⁷¹ Abbey, *The Monkeywrench Gang*; Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 18.

Americans” were.⁷² “The message of the rally was that the real cowboys love the grange and all that goes with it.”⁷³ In 1982, the Round River Rendezvous was strategically held in Little Granite Creek, Montana. Edward Abbey and three hundred Earth First!ers removed survey stakes for a main road critical to exploratory oil drilling sites. In 1983, Mike Roselle relocated to the Pacific Northwest and Earth First! appeared in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness in Southern Oregon/Northern California.⁷⁴ That year an Earth First!er buried up to his neck in the middle of the road disrupted the US Forest Service’s construction of the Gasquet-Orleans road, an artery that facilitated logging in one of the largest roadless wilderness areas in the region.⁷⁵ The road also desecrated Doctor Rock, a sacred site for the Karuk.⁷⁶ By 1985, Earth First! nodes supported preservation projects spanning the American West from north to south. In just five years, its appeal for more militant and uncompromising engagement in environmental politics had proliferated radical environmental struggles. As co-founder, Ron Kezar noted later, it “was an idea whose time had come.”⁷⁷

⁷² The Sagebrush Rebellion was launched during the “reign” of James Watt as Secretary of the Interior under Ronald Reagan’s administration. Funded primarily by the mining industry, the Sagebrush Rebellion prefigured today’s Wise Use Movement and supported “popular” resistance to conservation and preservation of federal lands and instead advocated for the purported “wise use” of public resources by transferring ownership from federal to state to private industry domain. See: Durbin, *Tree Huggers*, 97-98; Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 16. In the Pacific Northwest the “wise use” movement emerged as the Yellow Ribbon Campaign, which encouraged logging communities to fly yellow ribbons to show support for the timber industry and opposition to spotted owl protections. See: Proctor, “Whose Nature?,” 272-273.

⁷³ Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 62.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 62-65.

⁷⁵ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 125.

⁷⁶ Jene L. McCovey, Earth First! prayer warrior and Karuk, Hupa and Yurok tribal member, in conversation with the author, December 2008

⁷⁷ Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 59.

This chapter looks closely at the formation of Earth First! - the land-based “arm” of radical environmentalism – and its political culture of anarchism which permeates its network of ecological resistance struggles. I argue that Earth First!’s strategic use of *image politics* combined with their refusal of formal organizational “membership” and ethico-political commitments to non-hierarchical leadership encouraged local nodes of resistance to ecological destruction to form organically. EF! anarcho-environmentalism inspired the proliferation of eco-actions under the “banner” Earth First! across the US throughout the 1980s.⁷⁸

Similar to Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, Earth First! formed around shared commitments to direct action in resistance to ecological destruction, but with an emphasis on the land and forest preservation. However, Earth First!’s emphasis on dry land (so to speak) is not their only divergence from the radical environmental organizations that came before them. Founded on a philosophy of deep ecology and seeking that total “paradigm shift” that Naess called for, Earth First! made strategic decisions about how they organized themselves in order to avoid reproducing the power structures inherent in industrial culture. Of Earth First!’s structure, Foreman writes:

Ever since the Earth goddesses of ancient Greece were supplanted by the macho Olympians, repression of women and Earth has gone hand in hand with imperial organization. EARTH FIRST! decided to be

⁷⁸ DeLuca, *Image Politics*; see also: Daktari, “Ecocentric Anarchy,” 66; Earth First!, “What is Earth First!?” Uri Gordon refers to “banners” as fluid, “self-defined ‘Networks’...umbrellas under which certain parts of the anarchist movement act in a particular area...a convenient label for a certain goal or type of political activity, which can – although, not always – be accompanied by a concrete network, in the sense that people operating under the same banner in different locations have a significant level of communication tools (meetings, email lists, websites, a newsletter).” See: Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 15.

nonorganization: no officers, no bylaws or constitution, no incorporation, no tax status, just a collection of women and men committed to the Earth... We felt that if we took on the organization of the industrial state, we would soon accept their anthropocentric paradigm much as Audubon and the Sierra Club already had.⁷⁹

While not explicitly anarchist at inception, Foreman's statement illustrates how Earth First!'s formation was an attempt by movement founders to move away from mainstream environmental forms of organizing, which had proven ineffective in protecting the wild they so dearly loved. Furthermore, it highlights an effort to move away from mainstream American culture, an attempt to avoid the "anthropocentric paradigm" of the "industrial state." EF! was formed to be anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchically organized at its inception. By insisting on open membership – by doing, not by paying with money - Earth First! achieved a scale of direct confrontation with industrial destruction which neither Greenpeace, nor the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society could claim.

I argue that EF!'s capacity to resist ecological destruction expanded quickly across the US and eventually Europe, in large part due to its decentralized, horizontal, anti-authoritarian structure. These (non)organizational structural traits belie a culture of anarchism operating within the movement. Earth First! practice is embodied by a political culture of anarchism (open membership, prefigurative politics, decentralized leadership, skill shares, and grassroots research) and insurgent learning (movement

⁷⁹ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 21.

systems and cultural practices which place importance on grassroots knowledge production and tools for sharing this knowledge within the movement).⁸⁰

To date, Earth First!’s relationship to anarchism in the US has not been closely examined by movement scholars. Rather, the presence of anarchism has been superficially reviewed as a political difference that forced a split between the Earth First! “old guard” (presumably not Anarchist) and the “Revolution-for-the-hell-of-it rowdies,” (presumably Anarchist) and either dismissed or ignored by journalists.⁸¹ Conversely, scholars of the *newest social movements*, while centering anarchist practice and formations in their discussions, mention Earth First! only in passing.⁸² Here I want to offer a close reading of the anarchist practices within Earth First! in order to demonstrate how these practices supported the formation of a significant political force in opposition to industrial destruction in the American West.

Uri Gordon describes the “political culture of anarchism” characterized by a prefigurative politics including direct action, do-it-yourself grassroots alternatives, horizontal organizing, cultural expressions of values such as, but not limited to: art, music, dress and diet; and political language with an “emphasis [on] resistance to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and more generally to hierarchy and domination.”⁸³ By forming itself as a non-organization and explicitly eschewing movement leaders-as-figureheads Earth First! plants roots in anarchist tradition and illustrates its use of “shared

⁸⁰ Callahan, “Rebel Pedagogy.”

⁸¹ Terminology of faction is Dave Foreman’s, see: Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 217.

⁸² Regarding Earth First! see: Lee, *Earth First!*, 97-100; Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 87-90; Manes, *Green Rage*, 102-103; and Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 409-413. Regarding the newest social movements: Day, *Gramsci is Dead*; Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*.

⁸³ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 4.

forms of organizing” as outlined by Gordon above.⁸⁴ Reviewing its proliferation in the American West, one can highlight EF!’s other aspects of anarchist praxis.

Cultural Expression

Alexandra Plows makes the case for including culture and lifestyle as critical parts of “what makes a social movement able to mobilize and take other sorts of more ‘political’ action.”⁸⁵ Within Earth First!, earth-based spiritualities, “biocentric worldviews,” and distinct subcultures, provide foundational orientations to how Earth First!ers pursue a radical environmental politics based on low impact lifestyle and putting their bodies on the line to protect the earth.

Earthen-Spirituality

In 1980, shortly after the conclusion of RARE II, a group of disillusioned veterans of the environmental movement – Dave Foreman, Howie Wolke, Bart Koehler, Ron Kezar - and Mike Roselle met on a backpacking trip in the Pinacate desert looking for spiritual answers to the political disillusionment of the aftermath of RARE II.⁸⁶ After

⁸⁴ Purkis, “Leaderless Cultures,” 160-177.

⁸⁵ Alex Plows. “Practices and Praxis,” 138, quoted in Gordon, 19.

⁸⁶ For accounts of Earth First!’s formation see: Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 17-18; 216; Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 122-133; Manes, *Green Rage*, 4; 67-69; and Roselle, *Tree Spiker*, 43-52. Foreman’s account of the founding of EF! is radically different than the movement legend, as told by journalist Susan Zakin and also corroborated by Roselle, and circulated in stories around campfires, according to their version EF! was created after an all male camping trip to Pinacate desert in Mexico. It is important to note that Foreman’s account differs not only in location from Roselle, Manes, and Zakin but also omits Roselle, except as a footnote roughly 200 pages later, and instead includes Susan Morgan another mainstream environmental veteran, who was actually the first editor of the *Earth First! Journal*. See: Kris Maenz, “The Life and Times of Our Beloved Journal – A Not-So-Brief History,” *Earth First! Journal*, (November-December 2000), 12. Zakin cites Ron Kezar’s diary (129) as a source for her account. Although in his initial description of the founding of Earth First! Foreman does not mention Mike Roselle, later in his book, he says in a footnote that Roselle was a founding member of EF!. It seems likely that the

days “wandering the desert,” Foreman had a revelation – man must commit to “a placing of Earth first in all decisions, even ahead of human welfare if necessary.” Foreman’s use of “Earth” in his text actually referred to Wilderness – the space perceived to be free of human communities and devoid of industrial ecological degradation.⁸⁷

Gordon notes that “Cultural expression,” including spirituality, “can serve as a shorthand designation of affiliation and connection with others...it plays an important role in the articulation of personal or collective identities...”⁸⁸ Conceptions of pristine Wilderness, Nature or “Mother Earth” as sacred inform Earth First’s “no compromise” politics, ethos of direct action and appeal to activist identities. Earth-based spirituality inspires the action-oriented political ethos of Earth First! by appealing to, and yet also producing, a “higher consciousness,” a biocentric morality which supersedes industrial supremacy. A number of scholars recognize the critical role spirituality plays in Earth First! and the radical environmental community in general. Bron Taylor argues that Earth First! activists connect their earth and nature-based spiritualities with their political actions and “low impact lifestyles.” Echoing the second-wave feminist mantra, “the personal is political,” Taylor concludes that today “*the mystical is also political because the earth is sacred.*” Taylor casts the radical environmental movement as a “pagan

omission of Roselle from Foreman’s account has to do with his “divorce” from Earth First! in 1990 as his political differences with Roselle’s Leftist contingent in the Northwest became amplified. A woman is rumored to have been on the trip as well, but her presence is contested and by most accounts she remains invisible.

⁸⁷ Foreman, “Putting the Earth First,” 348. Regarding Foreman’s understanding of “wilderness” see: Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*. Ramachandra Guha notes that conceptions of Earth as wilderness free of people, belies a “preoccupation with wilderness preservation” and a “frankly imperialist manifesto.” He notes that it reproduces a colonial relation of power in that “the setting aside of wilderness areas [in the Third World] has resulted in the direct transfer of resources from the poor to the rich.” Guha, “Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation,” 75.

⁸⁸ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 19.

environmentalism,” suggesting that it is “the countercultural spiritualities, especially those based in mystical experiences, including pantheistic and animistic perceptions, that motivate most of its [Earth First!] supporters.”⁸⁹

Timothy Ingalsbee, concurring with other authors who recognize spiritual beliefs as critical components of Earth First! activist identities, adds that such cultural and ritual practices informed by “Earth as Sacred” attitudes contribute to its ability to mobilize against industrial extraction despite limited access to material resources. “Ecological self realization” in which the activist (generally through some close encounter with Nature/Wild) comes to realize his/her “Ecological Self” motivates the collective production of biocentric discourses expressed through creative physical protest and celebration. This development of a collective “biocentric worldview” by Earth First!ers functions as a symbolic resource and

open up new perceptions and conceptions of human beings, as a part of, not apart from Nature. These worldviews, or “visions,” serve as cognitive frameworks for [Earth First!ers] to socially construct their movement identifications and activist identities.⁹⁰

These collective identities are formed by the creation of shared rituals, which unfortunately, are usually “taken” from somewhere else.

Any discussion of Earth First! spirituality must also examine a proclivity toward spiritual appropriation from Native American traditions. For example, Martha Lee notes

⁸⁹ Taylor, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part II),” 226; Taylor, “Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I),” 178-179.

⁹⁰ Ingalsbee, “Earth First! Activism,” 268. Ingalsbee goes on to say: “Ontologically, the Ecological Self conveys a sense of cosmic unity, of oneness with the Earth; epistemologically it incorporates emotional, intuitional, mystical ways of knowing, along with scientific knowledge and rationalist thinking.” See Ingalsbee, “Earth First! Activism,” 268-269.

that Dave Foreman introduced “Mudhead Kachina” to the Earth First! movement in a series of articles in the *Earth First! Journal* in 1989. During the 1989 RRR in the Jemez Mountains of New Mexico, Earth First!ers appropriated the Hopi sacred mythology of Kachinas in an effort to lighten the mood after the American Flag was burned. EF!ers “got naked, rubbed mud all over, and...just started making fun of everyone and everybody.”⁹¹ Kachinas are considered the “life force of the cosmos that surround the Hopi...[they] can make it rain, cause the crops to grow well, or bring a multitude of other benefits if they are properly treated.” The Hopi share the spiritual mythology of the Kachinas with the Zuni, Navajo, and other Pueblo people’s of the American Southwest. They are not worshipped, nor are they ancestors of the Hopi, “but beings with whom all Hopi have interacted for mutual benefit throughout the centuries.” Increasingly, the Kachina dolls have been commodified and sold by Hopi and non-Indians. “Mudhead” is a clown of sorts and is borrowed from the Zuni.⁹² The Mudhead Kachina doll became popular commercially in the American Southwest, and this seems to be how it came to the attention of Foreman, who was living in Arizona at the time.

Native American scholar and activist, Vine Deloria, Jr. argues that the process of cultural appropriation through which Native spiritual rituals, ceremonies, and artifacts are appropriated by Anglos can at times reinforce white supremacy. Andrea Smith elaborates that appropriation of Native spiritual practices constitutes another form of genocide, noting that Anglo entitlement to “freedom of religion” translates into domination through

⁹¹ Lee, *Earth First!*, 130.

⁹² Wright, “Hopi Kachinas.”

knowledge, or epistemicide.⁹³ While earthen-spirituality provides an important source of inspiration for Earth First! activists, it should be noted that it has also produced serious obstacles to their ability to organize with Native American communities undermining efforts to stop ecological destruction by alienating indigenous activists. Furthermore, critiques of spiritual appropriation demonstrate how Earth First! has not fully been able to transcend Western culture in their effort to end industrial destruction.⁹⁴

Subcultures

While, Earth First!ers generally share a reverence for Earth, there is some variation between subcultures within the movement. The manner in which these subcultures identify Earth, Nature, and Wilderness, caused significant tensions within the movement. Specific conflicts will be explored in more depth later, this is simply to review the differences in cultural expression between subcultures, keeping in mind that what they hold in common is a reproach for industrial ecological destruction and a deep reverence for the natural world. Of course overlap between these subcultures abounds, but it is worth outlining the most common and prominent within the larger Earth First! movement.

The allure of the Earth First! forest defender as an ideal Lone Ranger hero was fully embraced by EF! founders. Known as the self-proclaimed Buckaroos of the

⁹³ Deloria, "Is Religion Possible?," 37; Smith, *Conquest*, 119-135. Deloria and Smith also offer the historical context of spiritual appropriation within larger processes of colonization and commodification of indigenous culture. For a discussion of spiritual appropriation within Earth First! see: Taylor, "Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?," 183-215.

⁹⁴ For a discussion of spiritual appropriation within Earth First! see: Taylor, "Earthen Spirituality or Cultural Genocide?," 183-215.

environmental movement, these were a cadre of conservationists who could “expect to be outnumbered ten-to-one by timber-industry supporters...[so] the RARE II field organizers had learned to be brave and tough. They confused the locals, wearing cowboy attire to blend in better.” Earth First! founder Mike Roselle notes that “A true Buckaroo could be distinguished by his or her clothes: Wranglers, boots, a cowboy shirt, and a hat.”⁹⁵ The EF! Buckaroos, also commonly known as “rednecks for wilderness,” placed a heavy investment in monkeywrenching, ecotage, symbolic direct action, and typically favored the brave heroics of the individual with less interest in collective process. For the founders of EF!, wilderness was necessary for their own self-aggrandizement. They conflated wilderness with “Mother Earth” treating it as a “damsel in distress” to the EF! “knight in shining armor” with ecotage as the weapon of choice.⁹⁶

The Woo Woo Earth First!er differed from the Buckaroos most significantly in the practice of witchcraft. Those known as Woo Woo are practicing pagans of Earth First!. They believe the battle to save Earth is both physical and magical. According to Woo Woo activists, the Earth and her creatures literally speak, with love, beauty, pain, and often instructions. Prominent, North Coast Earth First! activist, Darryl Cherney emphasizes the power of magic as a tool for social change. He argues that pagans incorporate various spiritualities into their rituals and practices avoiding monotheistic

⁹⁵ Roselle, *Tree Spiker*, 47.

⁹⁶ The analogy to “damsel in distress” is mine. However, Marti Kheel argues that individual acts of heroics reproduce a patriarchal logic which draws from an “ends justifies the means” rationalization for violent resistance to animal cruelty and ecological destruction. She further claims that “rugged individualism” is also responsible for the industrial system which is being resisted. See Kheel, “Direct Action and the Heroic Ideal,” 309-312.

tendencies toward domination. Furthermore, he believes that magic is an alternative to violent movement strategies and tactics. He and other pagans prefer spiritual intervention in the battle to save “Mother Earth.”⁹⁷

Peg Millet of the Arizona Five recounts her magical experience while fleeing the FBI after being entrapped during a failed attempt to down a major power line in the Arizona desert.

I began walking closer to the road. I noticed some airplanes flying over, really low and slow so again I stopped and got really still. When the planes were gone I started walking again. The people on foot were walking in a line towards me and flashing lights around so I stopped again. I decided it was time to be a saguaro cactus. So while these guys were shining their lights over my face and over my body, I *was* a cactus. I tried my hardest to think like a cactus and to be invisible, and they didn't see me...I shapeshifted. Every time they moved forward they would shine the lights forward, but when they stopped they would shine them all around. When they stopped I would be a cactus. Then they would move again, and I would move and eventually I was on the other side of them. It was pretty amazing.⁹⁸

It should be noted that Millet is both Pagan and, at the same time, also a member of the Redneck Women's Caucus. Overlap is common between subcultures within Earth First!. In Millet's case she was born and raised in rural Arizona, culturally she has a cowboy background, aligning her with the Redneck Women's Caucus.

⁹⁷ Cherney, interviewed by John Sulak, “Darryl Cherney,” 48-55.

⁹⁸ Peg Millet, interviewed by Kimberly Dawn, “Let It Stay Forever Wild: An Interview with Peg Millett,” 61. The Arizona Five included: Peg Millet, Mark Davis, Marc Baker, Dave Foreman, and Ilse Apslund, Earth First! activists mostly living in Prescott, Arizona in 1986. Beginning just six years after Earth First! was formed the FBI set out to “bring down” the perceived “leader,” Dave Foreman in order to “send a message.” Apslund's ex-lover, Ron Frazier approached the FBI and volunteered to be an informant, a post which he was paid well for over the next three years. Frazier later introduced professional FBI agent Mike Fain to the group. Over the following three years Fain cultivated his relationship with Davis in order to set him up. In 1989, he thought he succeeded in getting Foreman to meet with him and vaguely condone sabotaging some power lines. For a more comprehensive account of the Arizona Five see: Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 316-341.

Aside from the Woo Woo and Buckaroos, there were the Leftist or what the Foreman called “revolution-for-the-hell-of-it” rowdies.⁹⁹ Most notably, this contingent consisted primarily of Judi Bari and the members of North Coast Earth First!, a node of Earth First! based in Northern California. The Lefties generally had experience with social movements in addition to environmentalism, most notably the women’s movement, anti-nuclear movement, anti-war movement, and labor movement. Characterized by the “back-to-the-land” or hippie dress and culture, this group was heavily invested in collective processes and linking radical environmental practice with social justice issues and practices.¹⁰⁰ This particular subculture of Earth First! is explored in more detail later, for now it is sufficient to note the distinction in movement experience between Buckaroos and Lefties, especially the different traditions of movement organization. On the Left there is a deeper, longer tradition of consensus-seeking and decentralized organizational practice, whereas, traditionally, conservation science and passionate individuals have driven the preservation movement.

These variations in Earth First! subculture eventually generated significant tensions within the movement including the old guard Buckaroos and the Leftists. For now it is important to note that through the use of image events, Earth First! was able to share its “biocentric worldview” with others outside the Earth First! community. Furthermore, by convening annual gatherings known as Round River Rendezvous, Earth First! created space for activists to spend time in the Wild, while also making it possible

⁹⁹ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding Leftist influence in Earth First! see: Bari, *Timber Wars*, 55-59; Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 264-266. For a full discussion of the pros/cons of the Leftist influence in the radical ecology movement, including Earth First! see: Bookchin and Foreman, *Defending the Earth*.

to share and develop its biocentric theory and practices.¹⁰¹ What follows is a summary of Earth First!'s initial repertoire of political action, including its use of image events and the Round River Rendezvous.

Repertoire of Political Action

Over the past thirty-plus years Earth First! has developed an extensive repertoire of political action. Actions have been executed at the points of extraction, production, consumption, destruction, assumption, and decision. Rather than review in detail each tactic used by Earth First! to confront industrial destruction, it is sufficient to highlight the general strategies for direct action, community outreach, and communication deployed by Earth First! during its initial formation from 1980-1989. This period differs significantly from the post 1990 era, as it does not include civil disobedience or forms of mass protest, which will be reviewed in detail in the following chapter.¹⁰² There are three significant strategies for political action which Earth First! expanded upon in the 1980s: 1) direct actions characterized as image events which brought public attention to the vast ecological destruction wrought by the industrial development; 2) monkeywrenching, or the sabotage of industrial equipment/process to escalate the cost of industrial development, thereby reducing profitability; and 3) community-building by convening annual Round River Rendezvous which provided critical opportunities for

¹⁰¹ Roselle, *Tree Spiker*, 53.

¹⁰² Silvaggio, "The Forest Defense Movement, 1980-2005." Silvaggio also provides a comprehensive account of Earth First! direct action tactical repertoire from 1980-2005. Reinsborough describes direct action at the "point of decision" as the tactic of holding decision-makers accountable. Direct action at the "point of destruction" is done at the site where the destruction is occurring, i.e. where the logging or pollution is actually occurring. Direct action at the "point of assumption" is the most flexible tactic as it occurs in the "realm of ideas." Reinsborough, "Decolonizing The Revolutionary Imagination," 184-188.

movement decision-making, innovation of biocentric praxis, and support for ecological resistance struggles. Furthermore, Earth First! political repertoire of direct action was facilitated by its publication and distribution of the *Earth First! Journal*. These strategies operated in conjunction to produce an insurgent learning praxis within Earth First! committed to expanding the movement's understanding of technologies of innovation, ecological science and political theory.¹⁰³

Image Events

In 1981 Earth First! made its public debut in the American Southwest when seventy-five Earth First!ers converged to dramatize a scene from *The Monkeywrench Gang*. They proceeded to symbolically “crack” the controversial Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River with a three hundred foot long roll of black plastic in protest of it as a “monument to progress” and ecological destruction. The Glen Canyon Dam was a significant site for two reasons. First, it disrupted the flow of the “mighty Colorado River” destroying riparian habitats upstream (with flooding) and downstream (with drought). Second, it was a concession made by the Sierra Club in exchange for the preservation of Dinosaur National Monument in 1960. Thus, Glen Canyon Dam both represents the errors of industrial society as well as the ecological magnitude of the mainstream environmental movement's compromises.¹⁰⁴

Kevin DeLuca notes, that like Greenpeace and the Sea Shepherds before them, Earth First! quickly mastered and innovated an image politics, but in this instance, one

¹⁰³ I am indebted to Manuel Callahan for bringing my attention to the role of insurgent learning within Earth First! and its significance to the movement's successes.

¹⁰⁴ Manes, *Green Rage*, 4-5.

centered on American forests. Throughout the 1980s Earth First! nodes formed a dense network of ecological resistance across the US indicating to some degree the success of the invitation to identify with nature through a proliferation of new localized struggles. Through creative physical protest, Earth First! constructed a critical image politics using their bodies as resources for ecocentric arguments. While the mainstream media often limits the message of alternative political claims through framing and narratives, the image events conveyed through activist bodies present an argument often impervious to the manipulations of corporate controlled media. Moreover, DeLuca argues that the staging of these “image events” constitutes a type of rhetoric, the meaning of which is determined by “negotiations between audiences, texts, authors, and contexts wherein none of these constituent elements is self-identical or originary.”¹⁰⁵ In this light, the use of “image events” are not necessarily futile attempts by Earth First!ers to send their message through hostile industry dominated media, rather they are “critique[s] through spectacle.”¹⁰⁶ DeLuca argues for the agency of the viewer/audience to construct their own meanings from the images, rather than presume the meanings intended by the media corporation is in fact what the viewers received.¹⁰⁷

Patrick Reinsborough notes how Earth First!’s use of “image events” to share information constitutes “direct action at the point of assumption.”¹⁰⁸ Borrowing from Reinsborough, the “contagious” aspect of Earth First! “image events” should be observed. Chris Manes notes that the innovation of image politics by Earth First! has

¹⁰⁵ DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 145.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰⁷ DeLuca, “Unruly Arguments,” 9-21; DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 123.

¹⁰⁸ Reinsborough, “Decolonizing the Revolutionary Imagination,” 188.

expanded “the universe of thinkable thoughts.”¹⁰⁹ I argue that when we see an Earth First! image event, we are invited to not only pass judgment on industrial development, but to declare it outrageous and unacceptable with our own bodies. We are encouraged to engage in eco-actions of our making.

Monkeywrenching

Earth First! interventions against ecological destruction snowballed. In addition to creative image events, Earth First! engaged in more subversive activities including the sabotaging of industrial equipment and operations, a practice known as “monkeywrenching.” For example, when Getty Oil began preparations for exploratory drilling in the Gros Ventre Wilderness in Wyoming, Earth First!ers followed the road surveyors and removed all the survey stakes to thwart efforts to begin drilling. When the surveys were replaced, the 3rd Earth First! Round River Rendezvous was held near the proposed road, and three hundred activists walked the road and removed the survey spikes for a second time. This simple tactic prevented the road from being built in a timely manner, thereby delaying the exploratory drilling; meanwhile the mainstream environmental groups had filed an injunction to block the road. Today the Gros Ventre is designated wilderness.¹¹⁰

Another popular monkeywrench tactic, tree-spiking has been claimed as a highly effective strategy for deterring, or at least delaying, logging and bringing public attention to forest issues. At critical moments, when a forest became eligible for logging, Earth

¹⁰⁹ Manes, *Green Rage*, 77.

¹¹⁰ Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 64-65.

First!ers secretly drove nails into random trees throughout the area then notified the owner/agency responsible for the planned logging with a note, announcing that the area has been “spiked.” The cost of logging is increased with each spike, as the spikes have to be removed or equipment repaired before operations can begin. Dave Foreman recalls how giant cedars on Meares Island, British Columbia were saved by “a massive and carefully organized spiking campaign.”¹¹¹

In addition to tree-spiking, activists sabotaged industrial equipment by pouring sand into tanks, breaking gauges, and cutting hoses. In some cases entire vehicles were set ablaze.¹¹² Writing for the *Earth First! Journal* in 1990, “CM” states that “in 1985 ecoteurs firebombed the \$250,000 wood-chipper in Hawaii that was grinding rainforest into fuel for sugar mills (without permit and in violation of a court order), the company went bankrupt.”¹¹³ CM also calculates the cost of each aspect of monkeywrenching outlined above, and notes that if the funds spent on police and investigation, insurance, and private security, are included then the average cost of a single monkeywrench incident is over \$100,000!¹¹⁴

Round River Rendezvous

Each summer Earth First!ers converged on a strategic site of struggle. The strategic convergence lent concentrated support to a specific counter-industrial project;

¹¹¹ Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 158.

¹¹² Watson, “In Defense of Tree-Spiking;” Lipmanson, “Blackcat Strikes Again,” 249. Also, for a thorough review of monkeywrenching see: Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 161-170.

¹¹³ CM, “Monkeywrenching: An Appraisal,” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 260.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 258.

celebrated successes and struggles together, skill-shared tactics for direct action, and made possible a series of conversations that shaped the movement for the upcoming year. In the anarchist tradition of the Temporary Autonomous Zone, the Round River Rendezvous, moved from place to place each summer, often landing where it was needed most. Reflecting the diverse constituencies of Earth First! the Round River Rendezvous are an amalgamation of cultural expressions within the movement. Every type of Earth First!er from the Buckaroos, to Woo Woo Councils of All Beings, engage the space playfully, some acting as bare-breasted “mudhead kachinas,” sometimes many activists combine into an “amoeba” often in drunken stupor carousing about the encampment. The encounter lasted for days in remote wilderness locations. Debates raged – does a flashlight really increase your ecological footprint? And where should an ecocentrist defecate in the woods? Activities range from this seemingly innocent, fun-loving and lighthearted play to the more serious “back country survival” skill-shares, anti-oppression circles and statement-making American flag-burning demonstrations.¹¹⁵

The annual Earth First! movement gathering at the Round River Rendezvous provided an important encounter, not only between EF! activists, but also between EF!ers and “wilderness.” This encounter with/in Wilderness while simultaneously investing EF! activists in a physical place, also provided an opportunity for new people to get connected with the broader Earth First! network and culture, generating a public forum

¹¹⁵ According to Hakim Bey “The [Temporary Autonomous Zone] is like an uprising which does not engage directly with the State, a guerilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself for re-form elsewhere/elsewhen, *before* the State can crush it.” Hakim Bey, “TAZ,” 101. See also: Ironwood, “Getting Together at the Round River Rendezvous,” 42-43; Walker and George, “20th Anniversary Definitive Millennium Round River Rendezvous Article,” 40-41.

for the movement to engage in collective processes of decision-making, skill-sharing, and innovation of biocentric praxis.

Manuel Callahan's assessment of the use of *encuentros* (encounters) by the Zapatistas, who emerged at the forefront of the alter-globalization movement in 1994, is useful for understanding the significant potential Round River Rendezvous offered the Earth First! movement. Callahan describes encounters as both "event and process" and notes that their success is based on mutual recognition of each participant's dignity and the assertion of "one no, many yeses." He goes on to describe the Zapatista "politics of encounter" as a "consistent strategy of facilitating broad, inclusive political spaces for dialogue without directing outcomes and procedures for these engagements encourage convivial processes of active participation as it facilitates the emergence of a self-active autonomous collective subject."¹¹⁶

Similar to the Zapatista *encuentros*, EF! activist use of skillshares and the formation and distribution of the *Earth First! Journal* animates the Round River Rendezvous and other movement gatherings with a sophisticated "system of insurgent learning and knowledge production" capable of not only sharing tools for back country survival, but also for generating and distributing grassroots research and providing opportunities for reflexive innovation of movement theory and practice. Again referring to insights gleaned from the Zapatista resistance struggles in Mexico, Callahan highlights the centrality of "insurgent learning" as part of a "civic pedagogy that incorporates

¹¹⁶ Callahan, "Encuentro: One No, Many Yeses," 1.

learning as a necessary component to processes of democratization that disrupt globalization.”¹¹⁷ In other words “increasingly autonomous political mobilization has encouraged decentralized, non-hierarchical, diffused movement building placing a greater emphasis on knowledge production.”¹¹⁸ A system of insurgent learning intervenes in dominant capitalist culture systems by producing counter-narratives and knowledges. Insurgent learning is bound in a positive feedback loop with insurgent knowledge production, as subaltern actors – in this case the Zapatistas – “regenerate [sic] processes of learning and reclaim [sic] our knowledge commons on a community-wide scale.”¹¹⁹

In the case of Earth First!, the state sanctioned process for managing wilderness had failed by grassroots accounts, which revealed the extent of wilderness available for preservation during the Roadless Area Review and Evaluation, compared to that which was *actually* set aside as wilderness. Furthermore, even the mainstream Environmental Movement Organizations had become complicit in a system of natural resource and forest management which had come to barter preservation of one place in exchange for destruction (read development) of another, i.e. Dinosaur National Monument was preserved in 1956 in exchange for the construction of Glen Canyon Dam. The use of skillshares at the Round River Rendezvous and publication of the *Earth First! Journal* allowed Earth First! to both generate and articulate its analysis and strategies for intervention against industrial destruction.

¹¹⁷ Callahan, “Rebel Pedagogy,” 7.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

Language of Resistance

Uri Gordon notes that the “shared political language” of more recent political expressions of anarchism emphasizes “three basic markers...domination, prefigurative politics, and diversity/open-endedness.”¹²⁰ In the case of Earth First! these markers are most visible in the biocentric discourse which permeates its primary publication, the *Earth First! Journal*. Initially Earth First! had almost no critique of capitalism. Rather, its focus was on resistance to industrial extraction and the subsequent ecological destruction it made possible, or to put it bluntly the careless domination of Earth by humans committed to the Western view of progress and capitalist strategy of development. Further review on the formation of anti-capitalist critique within Earth First! occurs later in the thesis; for now the focus is to demonstrate how biocentrism elaborates a critique of domination; a celebration of ecological diversity; and insists upon a politics of the act.

The *Earth First! Journal* played a vital role in elaborating a biocentric analysis of industrial operations throughout the US and sharing grassroots research for conservation, as well as, facilitating the proliferation of radical environmental struggles and eco-actions. Initially, the journal was incorporated as a sole proprietorship by Pete Dustrud. But when he became wary of advocating monkeywrenching and ecotage, he transferred ownership to Dave Foreman. In 1988 Foreman transferred ownership to a non-profit corporation named Earth First! Journal, Inc. and operated by John Davis, Kris Sommerville, Nancy Zierenberg and Dale Turner. Foreman has stated that the *Earth*

¹²⁰ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 28.

First! Journal was always an entity distinct from the Earth First! movement because while the movement was structureless, the journal required formal structure in order to coordinate the logistics of its publication.¹²¹

The journal quickly became an *oppositional system of information*. It was formed to facilitate communication across Earth First!’s geographically dispersed network; to share grassroots research, policy change, strategies and tactics for direct action, as well as, “ambitious” wilderness conservation proposals. The journal was “oppositional” in the sense that it made available grassroots research findings that refuted state and industry recommendations for industrial extraction, highlighting actual environmental impacts. It also brought to light the scope of environmental destruction wrought by industrial development. Furthermore it provided a public forum for dialogue and debate about “biocentric philosophy” within Earth First! and the radical environmental movement in general. It quickly became a contested resource as various factions of Earth First! vied for representation in its pages.¹²²

As Earth First! generated momentum throughout the 1980s, the practice of “placing Earth first in all decisions” became the motto of a movement breaking with traditional, reform-oriented, “the ends justify the means” environmentalism. But the second part of that motto as originally coined by Dave Foreman, “even ahead of human welfare if necessary,” became a critical point of dialogue, debate and rupture within the

¹²¹ Maenz, “The Life and Times of Our Beloved Journal – A Not-So-Brief History,” 12; Foreman, “Foreword” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader: Ten Years of Radical Environmentalism*, 9.

¹²² Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization & the Research Imagination,” 1-19. I am grateful to Manuel Callahan for the term “oppositional system of information” see: Callahan, “Systems of Information.” Foreman, “Foreword” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 9.

radical environmental movement.¹²³ Most significantly the debate placed processes of decision-making and power relations at the center of dialogue between a variety of social agents working toward ecological healing. This highlighted radical environmental politics in a new way, opening it to different directions. Most importantly, it provoked widespread, diverse critique of the *process* of producing an ecologically sustainable world, inviting new participants, collaborators and alliances amidst a plethora of radical environmental struggles.

In the early 1980s, the *Earth First! Journal* became the site for the heated debates that animated radical environmentalism as a wide range of eco-activists struggled with positions on population control in relation to environmental policy as well as other hot-button issues. The Neo-Malthusian discourse of overpopulation and its apocalyptic vision that pits human populations against the survival of the Earth and non-human creatures, attributes environmental crises to human populations regardless of what differences there might be in consumption of natural resources and environmental stewardship. Global population control is cast as a critical strategy for survival of the Earth. Unfortunately, without more careful assessment of contributions to ecological destruction, overpopulation discourse often recklessly targets Third World populations for sterilization and reduction without addressing patterns of over-consumption in the First World. This myopia and the ahistorical view of privileges in the North clearly reproduces forms of colonial domination.¹²⁴

¹²³ Foreman, "Putting the Earth First!," in Dryzek and Schlosberg eds., *Debating the Earth*, 348.

¹²⁴ Smith, *Conquest*, 62-63.

The *Earth First! Journal* provided a central public forum for Earth First! to negotiate its relationship to population control. By publishing articles, letters to the editor and opinion pieces the *Earth First! Journal* became a locus of the tension within the movement. Once again the political space created by Earth First! catalyzed the transformation of radical environmental politics. A flurry of letters to the editor espousing population control as a necessary environmental strategy began appearing in the Earth First! journal. A 1987 letter, published in the *Earth First! Journal* by Miss Ann Thropy celebrated AIDS and famine in Africa as “natural” remedies to the overpopulation problem. The *Earth First! Journal* received numerous replies both applauding and chastising Miss Ann Thropy. The debate not only revealed significant tensions over the relation between humans and nature, but the role of human domination of other humans in the larger process of planetary destruction and ecological renewal. The result was a movement-wide dialogue about the power of people over other people, especially the First World elite, over the Third World majority. Furthermore, it highlighted the editorial decision making process, including the scope and quantity of articles published by the journal. But in the spirit of prefigurative politics it came down to criticism about the power wielded by the editors as the ones who also controlled the non-profit corporation that owned the journal.¹²⁵

¹²⁵ Miss Ann Thropy, “Overpopulation and Industrialism,” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 137-140. Zakin notes that “Miss Ann Thropy” was a pseudonym for Chris Manes, see: Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 350. Suslositna Eddy, “Sapiens and Sourdough Sequel: Lifecycle of a Detritovore,” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 140-143; R. Wills Flowers, “This is Pro-life?,” in Davis eds., *The Earth First! Reader*, 143-149; Leslie Lyon, “Love Your Mother – Don’t Become One,” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 152-154. See also: Bari, “Why I Am Not a Misanthrope,” in *Timber Wars*, 82-84.

In response, the editors, who were also board members and staff of the non-profit Earth First! Journal, Inc. John Davis, Kris Sommerville, Nancy Zierenberg, and Dale Turner, declared their intent to represent only the “true nature of Earth First!.” They confirmed their commitment to report Earth First! news asserting a “focus almost exclusively on wilderness and wildlife matters and actions.” By “stress[ing] wilderness and biodiversity” the editors meant to “exclude [sic] the debates over style, emphasis and politics” that Earth First! needed in order to refine strategies for resistance against industrial capital. Citing “irresolvable debates over anarchy, flags, immigration, [and] diet” the old guard resolved to censor the Earth First! movement.¹²⁶ In other words, the editors refused to interrogate white and/or male privilege as part of the struggle to protect the earth. However, at the annual encounter at the Round River Rendezvous shortly after this statement was published, oppositional Earth First!ers asserted claims to the movement’s publication and subverted its privatization by a self-appointed cadre from the “original tribe.” The movement’s non-organizational formation and rejection of hierarchy lent moral authority to the opposition. Following negotiations conducted at the Round River Rendezvous several concessions were made.

At the 1990 Round River Rendezvous the contentious issue of representation in the *Earth First! Journal*, outlined above, was addressed in a meeting that lasted over seven hours. It was argued that “the *Journal*’s biocentrism-only policy limited movement expansion.” The issue of concentrated power in the Earth First! movement

¹²⁶ John Davis, “On the True Nature of Earth First!,” quoted by Kris Maenz, “The Life and Times of Our Beloved Journal – A Not-So-Brief History,” 13.

was also discussed. According to Earth First!er Kris Maenz, “the overlapping board and staff [sic] struck many as a serious conflict of interest.”¹²⁷ All those present agreed to the formation of the Journal Advisory Committee demonstrating the movement’s commitment to anti-authoritarian accountability and continued non-hierarchical organization. However, the established editorial board rejected the authority of the newly formed Journal Advisory Committee. They insisted that it was a privately controlled publication that could not be “taken over.” In defiance they retired the *Earth First! Journal* in 1990 allowing for a new publication to emerge.¹²⁸ Titled simply *Earth First!* the new journal was published by an editorial board which rotated representation from different parts of the US.¹²⁹ The way in which the larger Earth First! movement managed the tensions surrounding representation within the *Earth First! Journal* reveals how the specific forms of shared organizing deployed by Earth First! are able to address internal movement conflict in a way which is reflexive and supports movement innovation.

Friction

The emergence of Earth First! as an eclectic popular resistance to ecological destruction had long garnered the interest of the FBI. According to Dave Foreman, FBI agents “dusted the entire Glen Canyon Dam crack for fingerprints” after EF!’s public debut in 1980. By 1987 the FBI had begun a formal investigation of Earth First! “terrorists.” In 1988 Ron Frazier, a “friend” of some Earth First!ers in Arizona, became

¹²⁷ Biocentrism-only refers to the hard line conservationists who argued for population control, immigration restrictions and other misanthropic environmental policies as a means for “saving the Earth.” Maenz, “The Life and Times of Our Beloved Journal – A Not-So-Brief History,” 13.

¹²⁸ Foreman, “Foreword,” in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 9.

¹²⁹ Maenz, “The Life and Times of Our Beloved Journal – A Not-So-Brief History,” 76.

an FBI informant. In this capacity he wore a tape recorder and informed the FBI of EF! plots to sabotage ski equipment. Later, he also infiltrated the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society working on one of their boats after posing as a sympathetic mechanic from Earth First!. Eventually he introduced professional undercover agent, Mike Fain to Arizona Earth First! activist Peg Millett. The FBI also successfully placed a key informant, Catherine Clarke, in the *Earth First! Journal* office in Arizona. Under FBI direction the three operatives, Frazier, Fain, and Clarke worked to set-up Dave Foreman in order to “send a message.”¹³⁰

In Spring of 1989 an EF! node emerged planning to down power lines to a nuclear facility near Salome, Arizona. The collective worked with the support and encouragement of agent Fain (who even provided the transportation to purchase the equipment needed for the ecotage). Fain met with Foreman in an effort to bait him into funding the action. Being rather broke, Foreman directed Fain to the staff at the *Earth First! Journal*. Foreman indicated he might get funds from their yard sale. On May 31, 1989 the trap was set. Peg Millett, Mark Davis and Marc Baker went out into the desert near Salome to cut the power lines and were quickly surrounded by an FBI SWAT team. The next morning Foreman was arrested on charges of conspiracy. Six months later, Ilse Asplund was indicted and the FBI had the group that came to be known as the “Arizona Five.” The FBI had worked to set up Foreman and the Arizona Earth First!ers in order to “send a message” of discouragement to the larger movement. Over the following two years Earth First!ers were in and out of court and jail as the FBI attempted to scare EF!

¹³⁰ Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 22; Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 5; 330-335.

out of existence.¹³¹ Ultimately however, more than FBI infiltration, sabotaging, and provocateuring was needed to “break up” Earth First!.

When Foreman left Earth First! in 1990, citing “irreconcilable differences” for a “no fault divorce.”¹³² The ideological differences Foreman offered to explain the break-up were not entirely generated by the FBI persecution. The ideological divisions between Foreman and other factions of Earth First! had been developing for some time. The split focused primarily around conceptions of Man as a monolithic entity and Nature as outside of civilization.¹³³ Such tensions belie “radical ecology movements” which Carolyn Merchant defines as composed of incomplete, disparate, and oftentimes at odds, radical environmental projects, such as those pursued by Earth First!.¹³⁴ In a movement, which is necessarily social, Foreman’s refusal to consider human needs, reveals a fundamental gap in theory and practice. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing argues that it is within these gaps that real political differences are amplified and *friction* emerges, contributing to important environmental and social ruptures and successes. “As a metaphorical image,” Lowenhaupt Tsing explains, “friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power.”¹³⁵ Some factions of the Earth First! old guard refused to acknowledge contradictions and engage emerging debates, failing to recognize how these tensions encouraged new political possibilities for ecological resistance. Instead they declared opponents of population control to be

¹³¹ Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs*, 3; 338-341.

¹³² Foreman, “Good luck, Darlin.’ It’s been great,” reprinted in Davis ed., *The Earth First! Reader*, 266.

¹³³ Ibid., 262-266.

¹³⁴ Merchant, *Radical Ecology*, 8-14.

¹³⁵ Tsing, *Friction*, 5.

“revolution-for-the-hell-of-it rowdies” and “anarchists” more interested in “a reincarnation of the style and intensity of the New Left” than biocentric conservation.¹³⁶

In 1990, this *friction* erupted and shifted power relations as North Coast Earth First! emerged as an ecological force within and beyond Earth First!. The result was Redwood Summer and insistence on an ecocentric praxis that strives for, and also produces, dignified human conditions in the process of addressing environmental destruction. The following chapter examine the formation of North Coast Earth First!, the shift in radical environmental politics toward a post-wilderness environmentalism, and the corresponding incitement to violence against EF! by law enforcement and timber industry agents. I argue that the formation of NCEF!, despite its significant deviation from a conception of Nature as pristine and separate from humans, made a more reflexive conception of nature as the result of the growing impact of the political culture of anarchism within the larger Earth First! network.

¹³⁶ Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 216; 217.

CHAPTER 3 NORTH COAST EARTH FIRST!: THE IMPACT OF REVOLUTIONARY ECOLOGY

Where are we gonna work when the trees are gone?
Will the big boss have us wash his car or maybe mow his lawn
I'm a man, I'm a man I'm a lumberjack man, but I fear it ain't for long
Tell me where are we gonna work when the trees are gone?¹³⁷

In 1985 North Coast Earth First! (NCEF!) came together in the redwood region of Northern California. It was primarily located in three rural towns: Ukiah (at the time, headquarters of the California Department of Forestry), Garberville (in a place highly generous with financial donations), and Arcata (where many of the activists resided on/near the Humboldt State University Campus). Initially composed of mostly environmentalists, over time, NCEF! attracted a group of core organizers who had backgrounds in a range of social movements and radical traditions outside of wilderness preservation.¹³⁸ This convergence of people with experiences from a cross section of social struggles and political movements contributed to a rupture in Earth First! practice, forcing the movement to confront some contradictions and fundamentalist tendencies.

Jeffrey Shantz argues that in the 1980s and late 1990s a fundamentalist ecology had infused radical environmentalism naturalizing scarcity and linking it to capitalist enclosure of nature. According to Shantz, fundamentalist tendencies produce the paradigm of a “naturally scarce” world, where society is encouraged to choose within an

¹³⁷ Cherney, *Timber*.

¹³⁸ Darryl Cherney, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, December, 2008. NCEF! was originally formed by Humboldt State University faculty and deep ecologist, Bill Devall and two students. Lee, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September, 2007.

endless set of binary needs/wants (for example: jobs/environment) and to ignore the relations of power reinforced by the paradigm of scarcity.

The wilderness conservationism espoused by the Earth First! old guard and embodied most by Foreman's *Earth First! Journal* and editorial staff, reified Nature as ever-shrinking non-human space. Humans in this view are somehow disconnected from Earth. Given the human-nature dichotomy, movement is then directed to sacrifice human well-being for the good of the planet, re-call Foreman's decree for "a placing of Earth first, even ahead of human well fair, if necessary."¹³⁹ Radical change is framed within a finite context reproducing a social scarcity paradigm inherent to capitalist formation. Thereby undermining the political force for radical ecological healing generated by Earth First!. In this paradigm we can only have jobs *or* the environment, houses or trees, in short: Nature or Man.¹⁴⁰

This chapter explores how the shift toward, what Jonathan London calls "post-wilderness environmentalism" was facilitated by a change in the language and practice of resistance deployed by NCEF!.¹⁴¹ NCEF! ruptured the human-nature dichotomy by shifting focus away from individual acts of ecotage and monkeywrenching toward mass protest and civil disobedience in the forest. The turning point was during the famous Headwaters Campaign in Humboldt County, Northern California and is best characterized by Judi Bari's theory of "revolutionary ecology" which attributed the domination of people and nature to capitalist exploitation and called for placed-based

¹³⁹ Foreman, "Putting the Earth First," 348.

¹⁴⁰ Shantz, "Scarcity and the Emergence of Fundamental Ecology," 144-154.

¹⁴¹ London, "Common Roots and Entangled Limbs," 155-176.

communities which celebrate human well-being in a balanced ecology. Bari's theory of "revolutionary ecology" broke with the discourse of fundamentalist ecology offered by traditional EF! interpretations of deep ecology in three key ways: 1) a rejection of population control as environmental policy (reviewed in the previous chapter); 2) a refusal to confine radical environmental struggles to public lands, thereby refuting the supremacy of private property; and 3) an intervention against the marginalization of blue collar workers within environmental praxis.¹⁴²

I demonstrate that the shift in NCEF! praxis toward a post-wilderness environmentalism, as exemplified by Bari's "revolutionary ecology" was informed by the back-to-the-land ethic prominent in Northern California as well as anarchist practices operating in the larger EF! culture, especially ethico-political commitments to anti-authoritarian structures and reflexive spaces for horizontal learning where new analysis was incorporated into movement practice. Furthermore, this shift occurred in the context of a shifting timber economy, in which corporate consolidation, technological innovation, and the exporting of timber processing resulted in high unemployment and poverty rates in Northern California.¹⁴³

I note how NCEF!'s changing analysis was expressed through their music, most notably that of Darryl Cherney and the IWW-EF! trio. Furthermore, this shift away from Nature as separate from human communities was prefigured by a change in political repertoire away from individual acts of ecotage toward collective direct actions and mass

¹⁴² Bari, "Revolutionary Ecology."

¹⁴³ For a detailed account of the political economy of big timber see Pace, "Clearcut," 41-45 and Dietrich, *The Final Forest*.

civil disobedience in the forest, and the development of blue-green alliances between NCEF! activists and timber workers.

Redwood Encounters

In 1986, NCEF! Intervened in the hostile takeover of the Pacific Lumber Company (PL) by “corporate raider” Charles Hurwitz, his company Maxxam, Inc. and the institution of clear-cutting old growth redwoods. NCEF! organized a complex campaign to preserve, restore and sustainably forest the Headwaters Forest located on PL property, breaking with the public lands conservation tradition of Earth First!. The Headwaters Forest campaign became a contentious site of environmental struggle within and beyond EF! because it challenged the moral authority of fundamentalist tendencies (the projection of capitalist “scarcity” onto the natural world) within the environmental movement, including the marginalization of blue collar work and the enclosure of ecological commons as parks, preserves, or other privatized space. NCEF! re/introduced ecological (forest) commons as socio-political place at a time when green technological innovation, population control, and strict wilderness preservation (all methods of enclosure – physical and/or social) were offered by dominant and radical environmental discourse as our only means to “save Earth.”

Sequoia sempervirens, Coast Redwoods, provide the canopy for immense biological diversity of the Headwaters Forest. The sheer size of old growth redwoods is spectacular to behold, at times the sky is not even visible from beneath the canopy. The

complete ecosystem of old growth redwoods is highly prized by naturalists for the rich biodiversity beneath the canopy. The magnificent size and unique ecology of the redwood forest has encouraged occasional “crusades” for their preservation beginning in the 19th century and continuing to the present.¹⁴⁴ At the time of the Timber Wars (1980-1990s), the majority of unprotected old growth redwoods existed primarily within six groves in the Headwaters Forest: Headwaters Grove, Elk Creek Springs Grove, All Species Grove, Shaw Creek Grove, Owl Creek Grove, and Allen Creek Grove.¹⁴⁵ The biodiversity of the ancient redwood forest and its limited remnants made these groves highly valued habitat not to be overlooked by preservationists despite their being sequestered on private property.

Ironically, old growth redwood is also one of the highest grades of lumber as it resists deterioration longer than any other softwood, making its logging a highly profitable industry. Lumber exports in Humboldt County began in 1850, however the massive sequoia sempervirens required significant infrastructure and equipment in order to be logged, transported, and milled, their export did not become profitable until the late 1880s. The logging infrastructure for redwoods required heavy capital investment in advance therefore the redwood timber industry consisted primarily of a few large operations including the Pacific Lumber Company. These operations had increasingly consolidated into oligopolies of logging, milling, and shipping in the timber trade and had positioned themselves to take advantage of redwood logging in such a way that the

¹⁴⁴ London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 155-160.

¹⁴⁵ Olson and Sawyer, “Northern California coastal forests (NA0519);” Trees Foundation, “The Headwaters Forest Stewardship Plan.” For the best poetic and photographic account of the Headwaters Forest during this time see: Dunning, *From the Redwood Forest Ancient Trees and the Bottom Line*.

smaller owner-operators were pushed out, which produced a generation of timber barons on the North Coast. In 1885 it was estimated that every \$1.25 invested would yield approximately \$450 per board foot of redwood. But the depression in the 1870s dropped the price of redwood significantly. Throughout the 1900 to the depression of 1929, the production of redwood timber accelerated and profits grew. However, labor strikes in 1935 and again during 1946-1948 reduced profitability significantly for most redwood companies, not including the Pacific Lumber Company.¹⁴⁶

Located about six hours north of San Francisco and ten minutes south of Eureka, California, Headwaters Forest is the tribal territory of the Bear River Band. In 1869 the US government transferred the region to the Pacific Lumber Company which maintained ownership until 2008. Incorporated in 1869 in Humboldt County by Nevada entrepreneurs, PL came to be managed primarily by the Murphy family from 1921-1985. After the Pacific Lumber Company's forced bankruptcy by corporate raider Hurwitz and his parent company Maxxam, Inc. the area was transferred to the Fisher family and incorporated as part of the Humboldt Redwood Company, LLC.¹⁴⁷ These very different claims to the Headwaters Forest - economic and ecological – have made Headwaters and the old growth redwoods of Northern California more generally a highly contested terrain.

¹⁴⁶ California Redwood Association, "About Redwood;" Farnsworth, "Gyppo Logging in Humboldt County," 4-48; Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 14-20; Bari, *Timber Wars*, 280; Harry DeAngelo and Linda DeAngelo, "Ancient redwoods and the politics of finance," 5.

¹⁴⁷ I am grateful to Marlon Sherman, Native American Studies faculty at Humboldt State University, for informing me of the Bear River Band's relationship to the Headwaters Forest. Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 14; 154; Harris, *The Last Stand*, 16-18. It should be noted that the Fisher Family also owns the Gap clothing company. Bay Area Coalition for the Headwaters, e-mail press release, July 30, 2008; Humboldt Redwood Company, "About Humboldt Redwood Company."

The Headwaters Forest is nestled in the midst of the densely forested North Coast of California. This part of the state has a particularly rich recent history of “re-settlement” by the countercultural back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, the Mateel Community (composed of people living in the Mattole and Eel River watersheds) played an important role in fostering an ethic of do-it-yourself low-impact living in Humboldt County. Refugees of mainstream America seeking more than the limited options of the middle class, the back-to-the-landers rejected the lust for modernity of their parents’ generation and instead sought a simpler and more meaningful life in a place they loved. This resistance to modernity’s trappings was facilitated by a healthy critique of government, consumption, and mainstream power relations associated with family, gender, and work. Instead, they sought to create communities based on care for each other and the Earth. The countercultural disdain for government officials transcends the Mateel Community and pervades much of the larger Humboldt County general population, providing North Coast Earth First! with a region steeped in a tradition of anti-authoritarianism. The anti-authoritarian, do-it-yourself, back-to-the-land culture of the North Coast was critical to the formation of the post-wilderness environmentalism pioneered by North Coast Earth First! and also informed Judi Bari’s theory of revolutionary ecology.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ Argee, in conversation with the author, September 2007. For a detailed description of the Mateel Community see: Anders, *Beyond Counterculture*.

Pacific Lumber Company

At the time of the hostile takeover by Hurwitz and Maxxam, Inc. (1985), PL was widely perceived to be a local business owned by the Murphy family. Many believed the Murphy's pursued fiscal and forest practices considered to be in the best interest of local communities and the environment. Indeed, prior to 1985 PL had the lowest rate of harvest in the Pacific Northwest and had implemented a sustained yield policy long before it was popular. However, just before the takeover PL had decided to eliminate its sustained yield policy and increase production for greater revenues and profits. In addition, the "goodwill" demonstrated toward PL workers and their communities within the company town of Scotia began to deteriorate.

Throughout its control of the industry the Murphy family made a concerted effort to generate employee loyalty through a company culture of paternalism. PL had outlasted most of its redwood timber competition from the early 20th century and by 1985 owned the largest percent of old growth redwood trees available for timber production, mostly located in the Headwaters Forest. With its company town in Scotia, California, and family-based management on the ground, PL had all the trappings of what historian Daniel Cornford has termed *scientific paternalism* or *welfare capitalism* which included living wages for long-term staff, and subsidized housing for the best of the best in its rank and file workers, and worker management.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 173; 201-205. For example see also: Wilkerson and van der Zee, *Life In the Peace Zone*; Harry DeAngelo and Linda DeAngelo, "Ancient redwoods and the politics of finance," 7; Harris, *The Last Stand*, 26-27.

Unfortunately, scientific paternalism functions in conjunction with worker intimidation and union busting. The Timber Barons of Northern California colluded and granted certain concessions to loggers in order to avoid worker agitation from taking hold. However, these concessions were not always enough. The Great Strike of 1935 witnessed every mill, except the Dolbeer-Carson Lumber Co. mill, which paid five cents/hour more than the others, and the mills owned by PL, walk-out on strike in Humboldt County, for more pay and better living conditions. The reasons for PL's lack of labor militancy and participation in the strike seems to be the mills' remote locations in the company owned town, a circumstance that PL management exploited and made a crucial part of the paternalistic strategy. However, evidence suggests that there may have been unofficial participation by PL rank and file. One PL employee was killed during the strike when local police and their deputies opened fire on a crowd of picketers in Eureka.¹⁵⁰ Clearly the paternalism of the Timber Barons was at their own discretion and they were not above directing law enforcement to break a strike whenever and wherever one should occur.

Conservative fiscal and forestry policies and the persistent involvement of the Murphy family on the company's board and made it possible for management to foster a public perception of PL as a "locally owned and operated" company despite the fact that PL issued publicly traded stock as early as the 1920s. This perception remained right up until 1985 when a controlling share of stock was purchased by Charles Hurwitz, CEO of

¹⁵⁰ Cornford, *Workers and Dissent in the Redwood Empire*, 102; Onstine. *The Great Lumber Strike in Humboldt County – 1935*, 3-10.

Maxxam, Inc.¹⁵¹ Local communities, and even the Murphy family themselves, struggled to grasp how an “outsider” could get a hold of PL without the family’s consent. On a national scale the takeover illustrated how the economic structural adjustments to the finance industry in the 1980s surprised even management as a new, elite class of financiers emerged to control American markets.

The business climate in the US changed drastically in the 1980s as increased mergers and acquisitions financed by junk bond *leveraged buyouts* consolidated ownership within fewer and fewer corporations. Advocated by architects of free market liberalism, leveraged buyouts reward managerial efficiency by tying CEO and other corporate management salary and bonuses to shareholder returns. Corporate raiders leverage debt, and force management to “strip out all excess managers, workers, and perquisites in order to pay off the debt.”¹⁵² The leveraged buyout also emerged as a means to ensure “financial efficiency” and appears to invent capital. Through the production and manipulation of junk bonds a growing financier class garnered significant economic clout with little to no real capital. The proliferation of junk bonds in major markets launched an era of Wall Street fraud which produced the savings, loan and insurance failures of the 1980s and early 1990s, and the housing crisis of 2008. It also resulted in the indictment of several prominent financiers, notably Michael Milken from

¹⁵¹ Harry DeAngelo and Linda DeAngelo, “Ancient redwoods and the politics of finance,” 6-8; 11-13; Harris, *The Last Stand*, 21-29; Zey, *Banking on Fraud*, 30, 68-69.

¹⁵² Zey, *Banking on Fraud*, xv.

the High-Yield Bond Department of Drexel Burnham Lambert, Inc.¹⁵³ As well as the collapse of the major investment firms more recently during the housing bubble.

Early in 1985, Charles Hurwitz, one such financier and associate of Michael Milken, began investigating PL's undervalued stock in an effort to diversify Maxxam's portfolio and make the next big buck. Later Michael Milken financed \$900 million for Hurwitz to gain PL. A third of PL's new debt was then sold to First Executive, one of Milken's biggest customers. Hurwitz then used PL's \$97 million pension fund to purchase an annuity from First Executive for \$37.3 million. By cashing in PL's stable retirement fund and reinvesting it in subpar stocks, Hurwitz leveraged the acquired capital of PL's labor force and made \$55 million. To make it perfectly clear how junk bonds work, Hurwitz bought PL for \$900 million with little to no down payment. The estimated value of PL's assets was used as the leverage to make the purchase. Once acquired by Hurwitz, PL then had to "earn its keep" by selling off its assets. PL's assets included not only its large inventory of old growth redwood, but also a significant share of stable stocks used for retirements. Executive Life failed in 1991 and PL employees were left with no pension despite a lawsuit against PL-Maxxam and several appeals failed to remedy the situation for local workers.¹⁵⁴

The leveraged buyout of PL by Maxxam, Inc. exemplifies the widespread corruption on Wall Street during the 1980s. A highly toxic practice, it was resisted by the

¹⁵³ Ibid., *Banking on Fraud*, 49-74; 139.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 68-70; *Hunsaker v. Hurwitz*, 14 F. 826 (9th Cir. 2001).

Murphy family management and PL employees.¹⁵⁵ In 1985, at the final stages of the acquisition, over three hundred PL workers published a full-page ad in the *Eureka Times-Standard* declaring:

We, the employees who have signed this, do not feel that this impending takeover would be in the best interest of ourselves, the shareholders, and the communities in which our company serves. Most of us are the hard-working individuals who feel that PALCO [PL] was an honorable, well-serving company, with a heritage that we could be proud of not only a secure place to work, but one which dealt conscientiously with the preservation and proper management of our vital resources: our people and the redwoods. . . . It is our sincere belief that if the company's leadership were back in the hands of the Murphy Family, the company's business, our environment, and the communities in which we all live will continue to prosper.¹⁵⁶

But, PL's history of paternalism, while generating some loyalty to the Murphy family, ultimately ensured a largely compliant workforce in the small company town of Scotia, California. The final transfer of PL assets to Maxxam, Inc. occurred without any signs of a strike or labor militancy by PL workers. It is worth noting that PL workers continued to oppose Maxxam, especially when their pension was looted. However, their resistance was never well organized and remained confined to a series of lawsuits which were eventually lost. Most importantly, by blaming economic hardships on environmentalists who it was claimed prevented profitable logging, Hurwitz deflected worker frustrations of lower pay and poor benefits, from the company toward environmental activists and policy.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Harris, *The Last Stand*, 72-80.

¹⁵⁶ *Times-Standard*, "Heritage in the Balance," page 24, November 17, 1985.

¹⁵⁷ Harris, *The Last Stand*, 93-101; 212-225; Bari, *Timber Wars*, 13.

Headwaters Campaign

The campaign to preserve, restore, and sustainably log the Headwaters Forest in Northern California emerged in the conjuncture of 1985/86. Wrapping up efforts to protect the Sally Bell Grove, Darryl Cherney and Greg King, literally, stumbled across the Headwaters Forest by mistake. The “discovery” was followed by an effort to map the region. NCEF! organizers carried out this “insurgent cartography” by hiking into the region by night and mapping by day. NCEF! fell upon the Headwaters just as Charles Hurwitz touted its liquidation and moved toward the displacement of the timber workforce from stable long-term employment to sub-contracted piece-rate gyppo logging.¹⁵⁸

True to its ethos of action, the group kicked off its campaign by offering illicit hiking trips into the heart of the Headwaters Forest onto PL property. Like many EF! projects, the Headwaters Campaign began with grassroots research. After stumbling into the Headwaters Forest while other Earth First!ers were protesting at Sally Bell Grove, Greg King returned with friends and began mapping the watershed.¹⁵⁹

The hiking trips to map the Headwaters Forest constitute *insurgent knowledge production*, as they were designed to inform the larger community of what was at stake on PL property, mobilize interventions against industrial destruction of ancient forests

¹⁵⁸ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 220; Harris, *The Last Stand*, 163-169; Darryl Cherney (North Coast Earth First! organizer), in discussion with the author, November, 2008. Gyppo loggers are small contract loggers which “meet the demands of the moment, then disappear [sic].” See: Farnsworth, “Gyppo Logging in Humboldt County,” 1. The concept of “insurgent cartography” is owed to Manuel Callahan, editorial comments April, 2009.

¹⁵⁹ Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization & the Research Imagination,” 1-19. Lee, NCEF! activist, in conversation with the author, September 2007.

and advance the prefigurative politics of NCEF!.¹⁶⁰ These forays into Headwaters allowed for a double mapping of the watershed: a *geographic mapping* of streams, ridgelines, and the like; but also, a *collective mapping* of the watershed onto the emergent consciousness of the community. Creatively, the double mapping produced by the Headwaters hikes are an example of “symbolic resources” generated by NCEF! and allude to a more complex strategy of social mobilization than traditional social movement theory allows for. Headwaters and the mission of NCEF! gained popularity as word spread throughout the Humboldt State campus of the wonders which are *sequoia sempervirens*. The formation and consolidation of North Coast Earth First! as a *collective identity* emerged and was solidified through the process of initiating and engaging the Headwaters Campaign.¹⁶¹

Activists began teaching themselves how to read and understand Timber Harvest Plans (THPs) in order to learn which sections of the Headwaters Forest were scheduled to be logged by Maxxam. THPs are the formal logging proposal submitted to the California Department of Forestry (CDF) by timber companies. Each THP documents a designated area to be logged and must include an Environmental Impact Review of the selected site. Legally, CDF is bound to review each THP to ensure that it meets all legal requirements for safety and environmental impact limitations. Unfortunately, the CDF has a history of close ties to the timber industry resulting in little to no review of the key THPs in

¹⁶⁰ *Insurgent knowledge production*, according to Manuel Callahan, is the ability for resistance movements to facilitate the generation of counter-knowledge in order to make informed and strategic interventions against systems of domination “as part of a more complex process of community regeneration especially through horizontal processes of sharing local wisdom.” Manuel Callahan, in conversation with the author, November, 2008.

¹⁶¹ Ingalsbee, “Earth First! Activism,” 264.

environmentally sensitive areas. On many occasions their scientific objectivity has been challenged by a number of environmental groups over the past 40 years.¹⁶²

In addition to a complex geographical collective mapping of the site, the insurgent cartography of the Headwaters Forest provided the necessary information to make informed and strategic interventions during THP reviews. Frequently NCEF! worked with more mainstream environmental groups to file legal injunctions often successfully appealing to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and other environmental legislation. In many instances, NCEF! worked closely with the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC - a grassroots “think tank” that emerged as part of the political ferment of the 1980s) to produce independent scientific reviews of THPs, which they presented to the CDF. These independent reviews impacted public opinion, generating widespread support for opposition to THPs which targeted old growth redwood groves and riparian zones. Although CDF is legally required to hear public opinion for every THP, environmentalists felt unwelcome during public hearings which exposed them to hostility and threats.¹⁶³

Once a counter-study was submitted and calculated, NCEF! would follow up on public reviews and legal efforts with direct actions to disrupt actual logging plans until a

¹⁶² Lee, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September 2007. Argee, environmental activist in Northern California, in discussion with the author, September 2007.

¹⁶³ Riparian zones are the sensitive habitat areas which surround streams. They are particularly important to each ecosystem because amphibians play a critical role in transforming the “the energy of the invertebrate world, that is, the plankton, insects, worms, slugs, and snails” into food for “animals farther up the food chain.” For a detailed poetic account of the way riparian zones have been decimated by Maxxam in the Headwaters Forest and its impacts especially upon salamanders see: Dunning, *From the Redwood Forest Ancient Trees and the Bottom Line*, 176-179. Argee, (EPIC organizer), in conversation with the author, September 2007.

judge could issue a ruling. In several incidents, activists blockaded logging efforts with a legal injunction in hand. Despite legal backing many were still arrested. In the most environmentally fragile parts of the Headwaters Forest, direct actions were initiated whether or not a stay or legal injunction had been issued.¹⁶⁴

Direct Action

As Maxxam accelerated the liquidation of PL's assets - old growth redwood forests - NCEF! Identified an increasing array of sites where direct action interventions against industrial logging were needed. This was not unusual for forest defense campaigns. Moreover, Earth First! had long instituted the base camp as a strategy to manage support for the direct action campaign in the forest.

Direct action base camps are typically located in public campgrounds on either Bureau of Land Management (BLM) or USFS lands. They function as a logistical site to coordinate support and resources for direct action interventions against ecological destruction. Each camp also offer activists a "free" place to eat, sleep, and generally live, during a protracted direct action campaign. It should be noted that the "free" nature of base camps is in reference to money only. There is no financial cost for activists to be at a base camp. However, this should not be mistaken to mean that it is a zone for freeloaders. Activists working on protracted direct action campaigns give a great deal of

¹⁶⁴ Darryl Cherney, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, December 2008. Lee, (NCEF! organizer), in conversation with the author, September 2007.

their emotional, physical, and intellectual resources to sustain the campaign. It is hard work with no financial (or other material) compensation.¹⁶⁵

Similar to the Round River Rendezvous, base camps function as critical sites of encounter between experienced and new activists in addition to coordinating resources and activities. By consistently offering skill shares for newcomers, NCEF! managed to produce a situated system for sharing information with inexperienced activists in such a way that the Headwaters Forest became a “training ground for activists in the ‘90s.”¹⁶⁶ Base camps provided opportunities for dialogue within NCEF!, allowing the movement to continuously reflect on strategy and make changes accordingly.

Skill-shares allowed NCEF! to communicate changes in strategy and ecological theory to itself as well as to newcomers. Skill-shares are a learning process not only for those who are new, but also for those who are responsible for facilitating them. As activists prepare for skill-shares new ideas are often discovered and incorporated. Because the structure of NCEF! is non-hierarchical, lived experiences of activists, new and old, are valued, creating a dynamic of constant reflection within designated spaces of learning. This reflexivity facilitated by the anarchist practice of non-hierarchical organizing allowed NCEF! to respond quickly to problems which arose during direct actions, in particular, encounters with loggers.¹⁶⁷

NCEF! direct action interventions against industrial logging at the site of extraction frequently consisted of logging road blockades, cat-and-mouse, lock-downs,

¹⁶⁵ Mama Bear, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September 2007; Birdie, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, December 2007).

¹⁶⁶ Manuel Callahan, in conversation with the author, November, 2008.

¹⁶⁷ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 28.

and less frequently (until the mid 1990s) tree-sits.¹⁶⁸ Other direct action interventions targeted decision-makers, including corporate and state officials who were confronted with similar tactics such as blockading and/or mass protest. More frequently, however, guerrilla theatre and various image events were staged as an effort to generate media coverage and pressure decision makers by making them look bad publically for allowing logging of old growth redwoods.¹⁶⁹

The use of direct action in the forest, meant that NCEF! had to negotiate intense anger and frustration and to prioritize safety for everyone. In the opening paragraph of her book, *Timber Wars*, NCEF! organizer Judi Bari recounts a particularly violent and unsafe situation during a direct action:

‘You fucking commie hippies, I’ll kill you all!’ A shotgun blast went off, and the Earth First!ers scattered. What started as a peaceful logging road blockade turned violent when a logger sped his truck through our picket line and swerved it towards the demonstrators. The loggers also grabbed and smashed an Earth First!er’s camera and, for no apparent reason, punched a 50-year-old protester in the face, knocking her cold and breaking her nose.¹⁷⁰

Yet, despite the clear threat which this group of loggers posed to the Earth First! demonstrators, Bari was one of the leading advocates for solidarity between timber workers and environmentalists. She refused the false dichotomy between dignified work and ecological health and insisted that cooperation with timber workers was necessary to stop ecological destruction in the redwoods. By explicitly seeking alliances with timber

¹⁶⁸ Frank, (NCEF! activist), in discussion with the author, September 2007; Birdie, (NCEF! activist), in discussion with the author, September 2007. For more on general forest defense tactics for direct action at the “point of extraction” see: Silvaggio, “The Forest Defense Movement.”

¹⁶⁹ Darryl Cherney, (NCEF! activist), in discussion with the author, December 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 11.

workers, NCEF! set themselves the task of framing their encounters in such a way that the logger/timber worker would be encouraged to shift his/her attitude to identify more as an “ally,” not necessarily of NCEF! but of the forest. The challenge then, was to show the logger his/her own dependence upon the forest for survival.

Given the context of open hostilities between NCEF! activists and timber workers and their frequent encounters in the redwoods, NCEF! developed a strategy for organizing which was based on non-violent direct action and civil disobedience, explicitly drawn from lessons of the Civil Rights movement. NCEF! had few requirements of activists, one of which was to take an oath of non-violence and attend a non-violent direct action training in order to participate in NCEF! actions.¹⁷¹ This was another area of contention between NCEF! leadership and the EF! old guard, especially as NCEF! eventually came to define tree-spiking and property destruction as violence, something few radical environmental groups had done at the time.

Revolutionary Ecology

Assessments of the Headwaters Campaign generally focus upon and celebrate the role of Judi Bari’s leadership in facilitating the emergence of blue-green alliances between Earth First!ers and timber workers during the redwood Timber Wars. Without a doubt, her leadership had a profound impact on the initiation of formal coalitions between

¹⁷¹ Mama Bear, (NCEF! organizer), in conversation with the author, September 2007. It should be noted that the commitment to non-violence, and subsequent definition of violence to include property destruction, is a significant cultural difference between North Coast Earth First! and many of its counterparts at the time. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis does not permit a cultural comparison of NCEF! to other nodes of the movement, and is limited to a comparison only to the founding principles, strategies, and tactics.

the two groups. What has been overlooked is how Bari's theory of revolutionary ecology also fostered a shift in the "language of resistance" deployed by NCEF! offering, for the first time within EF!, an explicit anti-capitalist critique of industrial destruction.

In 1989 Bari instigated the formation of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) Local 1 union to represent workers at a Georgia-Pacific mill compromised by a PCB spill that contaminated the work site and made at least one worker sick. The millworkers were already represented by the International Woodworkers of American (part of the AFL-CIO). During the episode the union sided with the company and refused to advocate for the workers. Feeling abandoned, they sought Bari's council. She worked with them to form a new union. The IWW Local #1 represented their grievances to the OSHA Review Commission.¹⁷²

Jeffrey Shantz calls Bari's fusion of radical labor, feminist and environmental politics a "green syndicalism" which facilitated collaborative resistance between timber workers and EF!ers against the "timber bosses." Jonathan London adds that this fusion advanced a *post-wilderness environmentalism* in Northern California.¹⁷³ Bari herself positioned her work and the work of NCEF! in relation to what she called "revolutionary ecology." Bari advocated for a "revolutionary concept" that "encompasses social and biological issues, class struggle, and recognition of the role of global corporate capitalism in the oppression of peoples and the destruction of nature." Bari's revolutionary ecology reclaims "deep ecology." She explains that "deep ecology was falsely associated with

¹⁷² Bari, "Letter to OSHA, March 16, 1990."

¹⁷³ Shantz, "Judi Bari and 'the feminization of Earth First!,'" 105-122; London, "Common Roots and Entangled Limbs," 155-176.

such right wing notions as sealing the borders, applauding AIDS as a population control mechanism, and encouraging Ethiopians to starve.” Convinced that narrow interpretations of deep ecology “muddied the waters of our movement’s attempt to define itself behind a common philosophy,” Bari reclaimed it by stressing the necessity of connecting “the poor and working people” to environmental struggles. Concerned with the privileged role of “white” environmental activists, Bari insists that “a revolutionary ideology in the hands of working people can bring that system [industrial capitalism] to a halt. For it is the working people” she reminds us, “who have their hands on the machinery.”¹⁷⁴ Disrupting the machinery, Bari argues stops the destruction.

How can it be that we have neighborhood movements focused on the disposal of toxic wastes, for example, but we don't have a worker's movement to stop the production of toxics? It is only when the factory workers refuse to make the stuff, it is only when the loggers refuse to cut the ancient trees, that we can ever hope for real and lasting change. This system cannot be stopped by force. It is violent and ruthless beyond the capacity of any people's resistance movement. The only way I can even imagine stopping it is through massive non-cooperation.¹⁷⁵

Bari’s theory of revolutionary ecology, embodies the “political language of anarchism” outlined by Uri Gordon, highlighting a resistance to corporate domination and linking the well-being of human communities with the well-being of the forest as a commons. Furthermore, her insistence on work-stoppage as fundamental to ending industrial destruction is in keeping with the direct action ethos of the larger Earth First! movement while steering it in a new direction, toward resistance at the point of

¹⁷⁴ Bari, “Revolutionary Ecology.”

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

production. Finally, the sustainable forestry initiative later offered by NCEF! as alternative to the succession of THPs offered by PL illustrated a future where the Headwaters Forest could support both living wage communities of forest workers, as well as healthy ecosystems, and is in keeping with the prefigurative ethos of anarchism and EF! in general.¹⁷⁶

Bari's interventions and re-working of misanthropic interpretations of deep ecology informed her refusal to dismiss blue collar workers and facilitate a tentative blue-green alliance in the redwoods. Her work resulted from the collective organizing effort by NCEF! and its commitment to generate community resistance to ecological destruction in the redwoods. The socio-political space for the shift toward a post-wilderness environmentalism in Northern California was facilitated by ethico-political commitments to anti-authoritarian politics within the larger EF! movement, and a reflexive system of insurgent knowledge production which allowed NCEF! activists to appreciate the critical need for alliances with timber workers.

Leadership

From its inception EF! has had a different orientation to leadership than other sectors of the radical environmental movement reflecting its commitment to non-hierarchical and decentralized networks of opposition to ecological destruction.¹⁷⁷ EF! founders eschewed "leaders" but themselves exhibited profound leadership qualities, embracing uncompromising politics and rising to the challenge against industrial

¹⁷⁶ The sustainable forestry initiative offered by NCEF! will be reviewed in more detail in the conclusion of the thesis. For a definition of prefigurative politics see page 1 of the thesis.

¹⁷⁷ Purkis, "Leaderless cultures," 160-177.

supremacy by declaring Nature and the Wild to be infinitely more important than development and putting their actions in line with their ideas. In keeping with its anarchist currents, Earth First! leadership seemed to be defined more by a “politics of the act” than any other characteristics. More than one type of leader existed within EF! and positions of leadership were filled by people willing to take the risk and to do the work necessary to protect earth, whether it was by organizing the kitchen at base camp, or locking down in a road blockade. The EF! anti-authoritarian tradition has ensured that even the foundational leadership was not institutionalized and therefore never calcified resistance to ecological destruction into bureaucratic stagnation, creating the room for a post-wilderness environmentalism to emerge from within a movement founded by wilderness preservation advocates.

NCEF! organizers had a different orientation toward wilderness than the previous generation of “Buckaroos” like Dave Foreman, and many of the other “old timers.” The region’s host of back-to-the-land countercultural dropouts – mostly ex-urbanites who sought a lifestyle which was more low-impact and place conscious – from the 1960s and 1970s facilitated an orientation toward deep ecology and biocentrism in which humans are integrated into nature-as-place instead of banned from the Wild.¹⁷⁸

The socio-historic context of the Redwood Timber Wars and the ethico-political commitments to anti-authoritarian leadership by NCEF! informed the tentative blue-green alliances in Northern California that provided a way out of the Timber Wars and

¹⁷⁸ Argee, (environmental activist in Northern California), in conversation with the author, September 2007; Anders, *Beyond Counterculture*, 9-18.

laid critical groundwork for the collaboration between teamsters and turtles at the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle. Yet, to date scholarly inquiry into labor and environmental intersections has focused almost exclusively on more mainstream environmental and unionized labor organizations.¹⁷⁹

Social movement scholars reflecting on the difficulties labor and environmental organizations have had in establishing working alliances argue that the polemic over jobs and environment is rooted in different cultures of “work.” Because environmentalists have separated “work” from “nature,” laboring in nature as well as factories is seen as destructive, while the ecological “footprint” of white collar work, often removed from any visible connection to nature is ignored. Furthermore, the formations of single-class foundations of both the environmental (white collar workers) and labor (blue collar workers) movements form a “cultural divide” regarding organizational structure (unions hierarchical, environmentalists consensus-based) perceived interests, values, goals, strategies, and tactics within organizing efforts.¹⁸⁰

Fred Rose identifies *bridge builders* as agents who forge coalitions between these otherwise oppositional groups because they can relate to “both sides,” i.e. they facilitate communication by acting as a translator. However, in his assessment of labor and environmental conflicts and collaborations Brian Obach refutes the cultural divide theory and instead argues that organizational leadership act as “coalition brokers” citing evidence that coalitions are primarily built by organizational leaders whose cultures are

¹⁷⁹ See for example: Rose, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide*, 56-73; Wright, “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?” 171-185.

¹⁸⁰ Rose, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide*, 56-73; Wright, “Are you An Environmentalist, or do you work for a Living?” 171-185.

less distinguishable than in the past (due to the professionalization of both labor and environmental movements) and perhaps less than those of the rank and file union members and environmental activists. Rather than form around cultural bridges, Obach argues that coalitions are formed by brokers who are able to closely align organizational issues with the concerns of potential allies.¹⁸¹

While Rose's essentialization of blue-collar and white-collar culture is rather problematic and does not actually apply to most Earth First!ers who are largely unemployed or underemployed, nor redwood timber workers who by the 1980s were mostly non-unionized, the role of bridge builders seems to be self-evident in the work of NCEF!. The blue-green alliances developed by NCEF! were successful to the extent that people could relate to each other either directly, or through someone they could trust. For example, Judi Bari claims her experiences as a labor organizer, carpenter, feminist and single working mother, combined with her affinity for the redwoods positioned her in such a way that she could relate to both timber workers and environmental activists.¹⁸² However, diverse experiences alone do not constitute bridge builders, leadership qualities are also necessary.

But Obach's focus on "leadership" is confined to those people at the "top" of the organizational ladder. His narrow conceptualization of leadership cannot fully describe the method whereby tentative blue-green alliances were formed during the redwood Timber Wars, especially since it runs counter to EF!'s explicitly non-hierarchical and

¹⁸¹ Rose, *Coalitions Across the Class Divide*, 167; Obach, *Labor and the Environmental Movement*, 206-208.

¹⁸² Bari, *Timber Wars*, 219

non-organizational leadership structure. However, when we modify Rose's *bridge builder* to include the leadership qualities implied in Obach's *coalition broker* (minus the authoritarian position) then a more accurate reflection of formations of non-authoritarian grassroots leadership emerges. Bridge builders require political savvy and the will to risk unpopularity in a movement based on voluntary association. Building relations of trust and political solidarity across difference takes *leadership* not leaders-as-movement-figureheads.

Breaking with Tradition

NCEF!'s position on tree-spiking reveals their investment in developing an alliance with timber workers, underscoring a shift in radical environmental politics that includes human well-being. In 1987 tensions exploded between loggers and EF!ers in the Pacific Northwest, when George Alexander, a mill worker for Louisiana-Pacific in Mendocino County (Northern California) was injured by a saw blade which flew in his face (scarring him for life). His blade hit a piece of metal in a log he was milling. Louisiana-Pacific quickly blamed NCEF! declaring the tree had been spiked by eco-terrorists. NCEF! immediately issued a press statement denying their involvement but, according to Bari, no press carried their side of the story. With the exception of the *Anderson Valley Advertiser* (a local paper which regularly published her articles), local

and national media circulated the story that placed NCEF! at the center of the accident, convicting them in the press.¹⁸³

However, evidence suggests that NCEF! did not spike the tree. This tree-spiking incident clearly contradicted general EF! practice. The tree spiked was second growth. NCEF! primarily focused on old growth stands and when trees *were* spiked by EF!, common practice was to notify the owner/public authority to ensure that no workers would be endangered. Alerting the owner/operators also increased the cost of logging by forcing the operation to *remove* all of the spikes. Louisiana-Pacific claimed they were never notified, although Rik Scarce notes that with the cost of a spiked log going through the mill being roughly \$3000 per saw blade combined with the rarity in which one will actually break from hitting metal, it would seem that they may have a financial incentive to look the other way if a notice did come in. After being convicted in the press, the Sheriff's investigation revealed NCEF! was not responsible, identifying a man from southern California as the likely culprit, but never filing charges against him.¹⁸⁴

The damage was done. The widespread public image of NCEF! as a group willing to defend the Earth "by any means necessary" eroded some of the trust which the group had been building with timber workers. It also amplified internal tensions between

¹⁸³ Tree spiking is a form of sabotage in which activists pound large spikes into living trees to hinder their logging and milling. After the trees are spiked, the owner of the trees are notified so that no one would be hurt. If a spiked tree is logged and milled, it would destroy equipment and possibly injure someone. Earth First! always notifies the owner of the spiked trees because the whole point is to deter their logging. Dave Foreman notes, the rationale behind this type of sabotage is that it increases the expense of logging, decreasing the incentive for logging companies to log old growth. See Foreman, *Confessions of An Eco-Warrior*, 149-160; Bari, *Timber Wars*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ Scarce, *Eco-Warriors*, 74-77.

EF! factions, especially when Dave Foreman and Mike Roselle continued to justify tree-spiking to the media even in light of George Alexander's injuries.¹⁸⁵

In March, 1990 at the Environmental Law Conference in Eugene, Oregon Judi Bari participated in a panel on "Labor and the Environment,"

where Oregon millworker Gene Lawhorn publicly challenged me [Bari] to make good my statements about labor by renouncing tree-spiking. I did, and to my surprise received overwhelming support from EF!ers there. We met afterward and decided to renounce tree-spiking.¹⁸⁶

This exchange between Bari and Lawhorn was both criticized and celebrated by EF! igniting debates regarding the role of violence and property destruction. Taking credit for the invention of tree-spiking, Captain Paul Watson, of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society, declared Bari's renunciation to "have seriously compromised the established principles of Earth First!." He went on to mourn her "belief [sic] that the loggers are not our enemy" and to declare that "the logger is a rot, a disease and an aberration against nature."¹⁸⁷

Most importantly this moment facilitated a critical dialogue about strategy and tactic within EF!, revealing a great deal about how leadership and power operated in Earth First!. If we apply Obach's "coalition broker" theory, then we can understand the continued abstinence from tree spiking in Northern California as indicative of the power of organizational leaders who act as "coalition brokers." However, according to Bari's own account, the decision to renounce tree-spiking was a decision made by several

¹⁸⁵ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 268.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Watson, "In Defense of Tree-Spiking."

Northern California and Southern Oregon EF!ers shortly after her own renunciation. But even if there was opposition to the renouncement, as Watson suggests, renunciation was not something that could actually be enforced within EF! or even NCEF! because of the anti-authoritarian structure of the movement.¹⁸⁸

As Uri Gordon has pointed out, resistance movements based on “voluntary association” (remember EF! has no “membership” requirements) leave no mechanism for enforcing the decisions of leaders. Rather, any shifts in the practices of anarchist social movements reflect a shift in cultural values. In other words, just because Bari wanted to build solidarity with timber workers does not mean she could force the rest of NCEF! to *be in solidarity* with timber workers. Rather, Bari was positioned as NCEF! leadership because her solidarity with timber workers was in tune with values already at play within the movement in Northern California. Furthermore, the position of NCEF! as one node in a larger network posed no *threat* to the rest of EF! because NCEF! could never force a shift in EF! practice. Any reduction in tree spiking which occurred was produced by transformations in EF! values based on a collective learning process. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison contend that social movements are inherently producers of new knowledge. Through “social encounters, within movements, between movements, and even more importantly perhaps, between movements and their established opponents” activists learn and generate new information.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 69. It should also be noted that Mike Roselle renounced tree-spiking as well. Roselle, *Tree Spiker*, 126.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 67-69; 71. Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, 57.

Internal EF! debates over tree-spiking reveal important assumptions about leadership and the largely invisible support which the EF! ethico-political commitment to anti-authoritarian politics lent to the shift in radical environmental politics initiated by NCEF!.

The material changes in NCEF! practice, shifting from monkeywrenching and ecotage toward the mass protest and civil disobedience, came to characterize Redwood Summer. The reconfiguration of property destruction as violence by NCEF! reflected a shift in the way radical environmental activists conceptualized ecology in Northern California. This shift was facilitated by an anti-authoritarian tradition in EF! and emergent feminist critiques of heroic individualism. Judi Bari argued that individualized resistance in the form of monkeywrenching and ecotage could not halt ecological destruction. She advocated for a mass movement in order to “save the planet.”¹⁹⁰ Bari’s position also reflected a growing discomfort with strategies that privileged, indeed celebrated heroic individual acts.

As wilderness individualism, embodied by the old guard “Buckaroos,” became a barrier to growing radical environmental struggles, EF! had the organizational flexibility to shift its practice toward post-wilderness resistance to ecological destruction. NCEF! activists claimed the forest as home and

Such place-based activism provided grounds for alliances with timber workers...A local identity – contrasted with the absentee-owned timber firms – helped to enhance a sense of common material conditions between activists and timber workers.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 221.

¹⁹¹ London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 170.

In doing so NCEF! proliferated rebellion, ruptured radical environmental politics and transformed the radical environmental movement. The following chapter will review the emergence of mass movement within North Coast Earth First! during the Redwood Summer of 1990.

CHAPTER 4 REDWOOD SUMMER: FROM ECOTAGE TO MASS MOVEMENT

Redwood Summer was coined in honor of Mississippi (Freedom) Summer launched during the Civil Rights movement in 1964 to bring national attention and support to Mississippi's African American voters who faced state sanctioned violent obstructions. Redwood Summer sought to bring attention to the scale of industrial logging of old growth forests occurring on the North Coast. It also intended to highlight complicity of local and state government law enforcement in illegal and immoral ecological destruction. In addition to raising awareness, Redwood Summer signaled the arrival and ascendance of a tactic in the political repertoire of NCEF!. With Redwood Summer NCEF! became a mass movement to stop ecological destruction. Its emphasis on grassroots community resistance to ecological destruction was an explicit shift away from the "heroic" and individualistic eco-warrior style of the old guard and toward a more inclusive and broad-based ecological resistance movement.¹⁹²

In 1990 NCEF! issued national and international invitations for grassroots intervention to end industrial logging practices, especially of old growth forests in Northern California as part of their Redwood Summer campaign. They told America and the world that a mass movement to support community resistance to old growth logging was needed. In issuing their call they undercut the hostile and dangerous environmental backlash which had been brewing across the West. They insisted that ordinary timber workers were not to blame, instead identifying corporate tyranny and greed as the villains

¹⁹² Bari, *Timber Wars*, 35. For more on *ecological resistance movements* see: Bron Taylor. *Ecological Resistance Movements*.

in the Timber Wars. Jonathan London explains that NCEF! “attempted to win over timber workers” with “the basic message...that the corporations cared neither about the long-term viability of the forest nor the well-being of the local communities.”¹⁹³ Efforts by North Coast Earth First! to define timber workers within a shared redwood ecology challenged fundamentalist assumptions about “placing Earth first” and re/introduced people and work as inherently ecological concepts and not necessarily destructive forces. This shift in orientation toward a revolutionary ecology challenged the inverted (and misanthropic) nature-people binary which wilderness fundamentalism had encouraged.

NCEF! invited people to mass protests, civil disobedience, and direct actions in and for the Headwaters Forest. In doing so they created opportunities for encounters with/in the redwood forest and with timber workers and other potential opponents of environmental restoration. Furthermore, by establishing base camps as a critical part of the strategy of Redwood Summer, NCEF! reclaimed commons as an essential aspect of community generation. NCEF! successfully shared radical environmental strategy and tactics with a new generation of activists.¹⁹⁴

To amplify their message, Redwood Summer was designed primarily as a series of image events which were simultaneously public demonstrations and protests. Highlighting the multi-faceted nature of the public protest as direct action *and* movement story, Darryl Cherney says:

Each demonstration is different because we’re story-telling through each one: telling the story of where the loggers live, the story of the company

¹⁹³ London, “Common Roots and Entangled Limbs,” 162.

¹⁹⁴ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 41.

headquarters in San Francisco before they sold it to the Japanese we're telling the story of the Board of Forestry and how the animals don't have any representation. We're telling the story of a corporate CEO who deserves to go to jail, and the story of a failed savings and loan. And each one of these demonstrations represents a chapter of living history.¹⁹⁵

Music

In addition to the stories told by the series of protests launched in preparation for, and during, Redwood Summer, music is also an integral part of NCEF!'s *insurgent system of information* and they were able to successfully use it to share their analysis with local communities and with the EF! network. Paul Routledge explains how social movements articulate place-based analysis of struggle through song and verse, or a "poetics of resistance," "They [song and verse] act as a political disruption and intervention, expressing emotions, hopes, desires – that which gives social movements their 'feeling space.'"¹⁹⁶ He argues that movement songs allow analysis to be articulated and shared within a regional base of resistance. Furthermore, these songs facilitate a collective identity formation within a movement, often downplaying politically divisive differences and emphasizing shared struggles. Within NCEF! music was used to share the movement's changing analysis with the larger community. The language of "revolutionary ecology" saturated Darryl Cherney's songs. The act of playing these songs in person as part of a strategy for community outreach added to NCEF! rich political repertoire. The widespread use of music by NCEF! played a critical role in sharing information within the movement and also inviting new engagement. NCEF!

¹⁹⁵ Cherney, interviewed by John Sulak, "Darryl Cherney," 48-55.

¹⁹⁶ Routledge, "Geopoetics of Resistance," 375.

distributed their songs to local radio stations and timber mills as part of their larger strategy to resist ecological destruction in the redwoods by working in solidarity with timber workers.

Darryl Cherney's 1988 album, *They Sure Don't Make Hippies Like They Used To!*, hardly downplays differences between loggers and EF!ers, instead highlighting serious contradictions between a theory of revolutionary ecology and the common practices of EF! such as tree-spiking and monkeywrenching.¹⁹⁷ However, Cherney's album plays up a primary element of EF! culture, their humor, their ability to laugh in the midst of immense struggle, even at themselves and in doing so it does focus on shared experiences or controversies within EF!.¹⁹⁸ The "Potter Valley Mill" song from the album *They Sure Don't Make Hippies Like They Used To!* narrated the closing of the Potter Valley Mill by Louisiana-Pacific and the lay-off of one hundred thirty-six millworkers. The lyrics highlight the unsustainable rates of logging in the Mendocino forests juxtaposed to the efforts by timber corporations to blame environmentalists for worker displacement:

And they're closing down the mill in Potter Valley
 Leaving all us good folks in a bind
 They're closing down the mill in Potter Valley
 And I can't believe the mess we'll leave behind

Now Ray says there's timber back there
 They'll haul it right past town
 Sam says the only way they'll reopen is if another mill burns down
 The company says it's environmentalists crimpin' up their style
 But as I look out on the Mendocino Forest –

¹⁹⁷ Cherney, *They Sure Don't Make Hippies Like They Used To!*.

¹⁹⁸ Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior*, 20.

Can't see a tree for miles...¹⁹⁹

“Potter Valley Mill” became the most requested song on the local radio station and copies were distributed throughout the mills in the area. One long-time prominent NCEF! organizer attributes the “Potter Valley Mill” song to her own involvement. The wife of a logger, she began to see the connections between the violence in her home and the ecological destruction which surrounded her family as she was increasingly the target of her husband’s economic anxiety.²⁰⁰

Music was also incorporated directly into the public protests or mass demonstrations before, during, and after Redwood Summer. Because “Potter Valley Mill” had become so popular with timber workers the IWW-EF! band, Darryl Cherney, Judi Bari, and George Shook, were invited to perform at an AFL protest in January 1990. The small trio played during the opposition to Louisiana-Pacific’s announcement that it would be outsourcing all of their milling operations to Mexico. They performed “Where Are We Gonna Work When the Trees Are Gone?” a song which was later published on Cherney’s post-Redwood Summer album, *Timber*. Like “Potter Valley Mill” it links worker displacement to industrial forestry, but with an even more strident anti-corporate message and more overt empathy for the socio-economic struggles of timber workers. It served to align the environmental concerns of NCEF! with the forest traditions of timber culture.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Cherney, *They Sure Don't Make Hippies Like They Used To!*.

²⁰⁰ Darryl Cherney, NCEF! organizer, in conversation with the author, December 2008; Bari, *Timber Wars*. 17. Mama Bear, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September 2007.

²⁰¹ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 67.

Now these corporate mergers make no sense to me
 But they've got this junk bond debt to pay so we're clear cutting all the
 trees
 Now that old fishing hole where I used to take my son
 Lord, we trashed it out last Monday morning, good God what have we
 done?, but tell me...

Where are we gonna work when the trees are gone?
 Will the big boss have us wash his car or maybe mow his lawn
 I'm a man, I'm a man I'm a lumberjack man, but I fear it ain't for long
 Tell me where are we gonna work when the trees are gone?²⁰²

NCEF! travelled up and down the West Coast playing music, engaging in direct actions, demonstrations, and speaking at public events to build momentum for Redwood Summer. Judi Bari's itinerary for NCEF! in the months leading up to the kick off on June 20th included monthly direct actions to pressure decision makers at strategic sites, public speaking, combined with musical performances at large-scale events from Mendocino County, California to Oregon.²⁰³ NCEF! was gaining public support from the mainstream and radical environmental organizations as well as working people. Their work to "truly confront capital's interlinked degradation of both natural and human communities" had caught the attention of industry and state agents.²⁰⁴

On their way to a speaking engagement at UC, Santa Cruz, two of the most public figures within NCEF!, Darryl Cherney and Judi Bari, were car bombed. The two had been receiving death threats for years and in the months and weeks leading up to Redwood Summer those threats had increased exponentially. The timing, target and

²⁰² Cherney, *Timber*.

²⁰³ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 72.

²⁰⁴ London, "Common Roots and Entangled Limbs," 156.

location of the bombing indicate that the agent/s responsible meant to discredit and disrupt Redwood Summer.²⁰⁵ That the bombing, and subsequent removal of Bari and Cherney from their roles central to its organizing, could not stop Redwood Summer is evidence of the efficacy of EF!'s decentralized and non-hierarchical structure.

Proliferation

NCEF! messages of mass mobilization and solidarity with timber workers brought a lot of attention to Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney. Even before the first mass protests of Redwood Summer could begin, they were targeted by the FBI for infiltration, disruption, and intimidation. A pipe-bomb operated by a motion sensor was placed under the driver seat of Bari's car, a car she regularly used to transport her two children. Bari sustained the brunt of the blast. She was hospitalized in critical condition and remained disabled for the rest of her life. Cherney suffered injuries to his face and ringing in his ears. After the blast, he was arrested by the Oakland Police Department (OPD) on site. When Bari came to consciousness in the hospital she was also in the custody of OPD. They were charged with a conspiracy to set off an explosive by the OPD.²⁰⁶

US counter-insurgency operations often target leaders of revolutionary movements for neutralization. The Civil Rights movement, American Indian Movement, and the Black Panthers, are all examples where people in leadership positions have been imprisoned and assassinated. Counter-insurgent efforts work to produce a spectacle of

²⁰⁵ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 52-54; 71-72. Darryl Cherney, NCEF! organizer, in conversation with the author, December 2008.

²⁰⁶ Darryl Cherney, in conversation with the author, December 2008.

repression in which the images of assassination and/or political imprisonment operate to discourage dissent through fear and intimidation. However, the bombing had the opposite effect on Earth First!. In addition, some of the largest demonstrations and arrests in the history of the environmental movement occurred that summer. Despite the increasingly violent nature of the retaliation against the Headwaters Forest campaign, Redwood Summer went ahead as planned.²⁰⁷

Significant new leadership emerged to manage Redwood Summer as Bari and Cherney's energies were redirected toward healing and proving their innocence. What Bari would later call the "feminization of Earth First!" occurred when numerous women in EF! took on the bulk of the work required to coordinate and implement an array of direct actions and demonstrations for Redwood Summer.²⁰⁸ The new EF! journal titled simply *Earth First!* proclaimed the first protest of Redwood Summer a victory, as it was attended by some seven hundred fifty activists, two hundred members of the press, and totaling forty-four arrests. The article announced that "California Earth First! forced a partial shutdown of Louisiana-Pacific's lumber mill" and "kicked off the campaign to save the world's last unprotected stands of old growth redwood."²⁰⁹ A month later, on July 21st two thousand people converged on the small timber town of Fort Bragg, California. The demonstration featured "music and speeches" by Redwood Summer

²⁰⁷ Bari, "Uncovering the FBI Bomb School." For more on COINTELPRO see: Glick, *War at Home*; Churchill and Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers*. For more on the bombing and Redwood Summer see: Bari, *Timber Wars*, 52-54; Karen Pickett, "Redwood Summer Retrospective," 8-9, reprinted in List ed., *Radical Environmentalism*, 207-212.

²⁰⁸ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 224-225.

²⁰⁹ Anonymous, "44 Arrested at L-P Mill," *Earth First!* X (August 1, 1990): 1, reprinted in List, ed. *Radical Environmentalism*, 202.

organizers and Georgia-Pacific millworkers who were going to lose their jobs when the mill closed and production moved to Mexico.²¹⁰

As Karen Pickett, Earth First! organizer for the Bay Area Coalition for the Headwaters put it, Redwood Summer

was an experiment to see if without a structure or a process we could stage continuous waves of direct actions aimed at slowing the logging to see how far our networking tentacles reached, to see how organized a non-organization could attempt to be before things began to get diluted.²¹¹

She goes on to say that its “biggest success...was that it happened at all.”²¹² The mass demonstrations achieved by Redwood Summer, without key NCEF! organizers Bari and Cherney, is testament to how powerful the network of EF! ecological resistance had become by 1990.

Beyond Redwood Summer

In the years that followed the first Redwood Summer, action camps as forms of resistance proliferated in the forest, as EF!ers increasingly worked to build alliances with timber workers while resisting ecological destruction. The one day tree-sit has been transformed into occupations sometimes lasting years. The lone tree-sitter has been joined by the tree-village where collectives live in a group of trees to prevent their logging, and the temporary logging road blockade has increasingly been replaced by

²¹⁰ Anonymous, “Two Thousand Rally at Fort Bragg”, *Earth First!* X (August 1, 1990): 1, reprinted in List, ed. *Radical Environmentalism*, 201.

²¹¹ Pickett, “Redwood Summer Retrospective”, *Earth First!* XI, (November 1, 1990): 8-9, reprinted in List, ed. *Radical Environmentalism*, 209.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 209.

“free states,” where base camp activities convene on logging roads to simultaneously blockade access to old growth forests.²¹³

Tony Silvaggio describes the innovation of the “free state” as “an important political and cultural expression of the anarchist biocentric tendency that emerged in the movement from the late 1980s and flowered in the 1990s.”²¹⁴ The activists he interviewed attribute the Warner Creek Free State as a critical site for movement learning. There was so much national media attention on Warner Creek that it drew more activists than were needed. This encouraged new activists to get direct action experience at the Free State and then move on to start or support logging blockades in other forests that were less publicized, but still in need of support. One activist declared “It [Warner Creek Free State] literally inspired a whole new cadre of activists...If you look at some of the names of the people running the big campaigns today [2005], you’ll find that many got their start at Warner.”²¹⁵ NCEF! deployed the Mattole Free State in 2001 to stop logging of old growth douglas firs.

²¹³ The most famous tree-sit turned occupation was done by Julia “Butterfly” Hill, who ascended the old growth “Luna” in 1997 and stayed for two years, until PL sold the land for preservation purposes. See: Hill, *The Legacy of Luna*. Hill’s occupation of Luna, while commendable, ultimately had a very negative effect on North Coast Earth First! and the Headwaters Campaign. NCEF! had worked to avoid the celebritization of tree-sitters in an effort to ensure that the Headwaters Campaign remained a “landscape wide” issue as opposed to a single tree/woman issue. Furthermore, Hill refused to cooperate with NCEF! when they wanted to shut down the tree-sit. Her persistence in the tree-sit meant that NCEF! energies were split and eventually factions were created between those who supported Hill and those who opposed her on the grounds that her sit was not strategic.

²¹⁴ Silvaggio, “The Forest Defense Movement, 1980-2005,” 191.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 191. The Earth First! Warner Creek campaign was convened in 1991 after the Willamette National Forest was set on fire and the site was scheduled for “salvage logging” by the US Forest Service. Cascadia EF! formed to oppose the salvage logging fearful that allowing a previously protected forest to be logged after overt arson would set a dangerous precedent. For more on the Warner Creek and the subsequent innovation of the Free State, see: Silvaggio, “The Forest Defense Movement, 1980-2005,” 174-192.

The success of NCEF!'s deployment of collective technologies also brought new technologies of repression. In response to NCEF!' ability to build critical coalitions and inform even larger publics about the environmental catastrophe of old growth logging, the timber industry increasingly relied on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP), a legal strategy designed to deter activists from engaging in direct action or civil disobedience for fear of being sued for their worldly possessions. The use of SLAPP has effectively limited the socio-economic scope of people willing to engage in direct action campaigns, and often impoverished those who do. Once an activist has lost a SLAPP, he/she faces wage garnishment to pay their outstanding fines. Furthermore, citing overcrowding, Humboldt County financed a much larger jail facility in 1994. Completed in 1998 the new correctional facility has twice the capacity of the old jail.²¹⁶

Despite a severe backlash throughout the 1990s, EF! continued to host Redwood Summers through 1994 and increasingly relied upon mass civil disobedience to stop industrial logging in the Headwaters Forest. Sociologist and EF! supporter Anthony Silvaggio explains how in 1997 and 1998 “two of the largest forest demonstrations and mass civil disobedience actions” were hosted in Northern California. More than one thousand three hundred people were arrested in 1997. The next year, more than twelve thousand people converged “in mass protest to protect ancient forests.”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Bari, *Timber Wars*, 97; Birdie, (NCEF! activist), in conversation with the author, October 2007; G.P. Gatto. *G.P. Gatto to Congressman Frank Riggs December 24, 1994*. Letter. From *Violent Criminal Incarceration Act of 1995*, HR 667, 104th Cong., 1st sess. *Congressional Record* 141 (February 10, 1995): H 1565.

²¹⁷ Silvaggio, “The Forest Defense Movement, 1980-2005,” 117.

As the movement mounted numbers of people to fight for the forest, the counter-insurgency efforts deployed by timber interests escalated. In 1998, twenty-four year old activist David “Gypsy” Chain was killed by A.E. Ammons, a logger working for the Pacific Lumber Company, who intentionally fell a tree on Chain. Ammons was never charged with murder and the explanation offered by PL for the incident was that Chain never should have been trespassing in the first place.²¹⁸

As the 1990s progressed the Headwaters Campaign began to incorporate new tactics. In 1997 a shareholders’ campaign was launched, targeting unions to divest from Maxxam, Inc. based upon Maxxam’s poor labor practices. Several unions throughout California divested.²¹⁹

In 1998 EF! partnered with the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) to support their strike when Maxxam, Inc. refused to re-negotiate the union contract after a year of markedly improved profits. While researching Maxxam’s history (after it purchased Kaiser Aluminum), the USWA in Tacoma, Washington, came across the “Jail Hurwitz” website and contacted EF!. The USWA invited NCEF! and the IWW to blockade a Tacoma Port where Maxxam was attempting to do business as usual with Kaiser Aluminum in spite of the USWA strike. NCEF! and the IWW accepted. EF!ers locked down to port equipment while the IWW informed the Longshoremen (who were responsible for unloading supplies from a recently arrived sea vessel) of the strike and the

²¹⁸ For a detailed account of Chain’s story see: Beach, *A Good Forest for Dying*. For a review of how the timber industry and media manipulated the event to advance the interests of private property rights even in the light of this murder, see: Widick, *Trouble in the Forest*, 1-42.

²¹⁹ Bonanno and Blome, “The Environmental Movement and Labor in Global Capitalism,” 370.

lockdowns. The Longshoremen refused to endanger anyone and the port was successfully blocked for the day.²²⁰

More collaboration between the USWA and EF! ensued. Maxxam had been using laid off PL workers as “scabs” at the Kaiser Aluminum plant in Tacoma, Washington, and the USWA began working to educate and unionize the PL workers. Eventually the USWA filed a lawsuit against PL’s logging practices. In 1999 EF! and the USWA were influential in founding the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, to coordinate support for the formation of blue-green alliances across the country, which culminated in the Teamsters and EF! “turtles” marching together in 1999 to protest the WTO negotiations in Seattle.²²¹

²²⁰ Mike Jakubal, “On Strike Against Maxxam: Striking Kaiser Employees Say Hurwitz is the real problem”, <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/Vines/9901/workers.html>, accessed on April 22, 2009. John Persak, “Earthies and Wobblies and Steelworkers, Oh My!” *Eat the State* 3, no. 15, (December 16, 1998), <http://eatthestate.org/03-15/EarthiesWobbliesSteelworkers.htm>.

²²¹ Silvaggio, “The Forest Defense Movement 1980-2005;” Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, “Houston Principles of the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment.”

CONCLUSION: THE PROLIFERATION OF ECO-ACTION

The so-called “Battle of Seattle” was won mostly due to the technology and resolve of Earth First!ers or people who gained experience through EF! style campaigns. Without both the “no compromise” ideals and the blockading technology, the delegates would have busted through the lines, and once again international capital would have won the day.

The black bloc, Earth First! malcontents, green anarchists and other anti-capitalists took the opportunity to say “fuck the civil – lets get disobedient” and raise the stakes in a way that could never happen in the forests with standard monkeywrenching. The black bloc is a result of the growing anarchistic and urban tendencies of our movement; its synthesis and alliance with other movements is a result of the urbanization of some of our warriors.

-- Pri Mitivist, *Earth First! Journal*²²²

In 1999, the WTO negotiations scheduled to occur in Seattle, Washington, were successfully “shut down” by a broad convergence of forces normally organized around a diverse array of issues including: labor, international solidarity, environment, human rights, prison abolition, agriculture, and many more. A broad coalition emerged in growing opposition to the WTO negotiations, especially the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, as grassroots research had shown that it threatened all aspects of everyday life in America. In the summer leading up to the WTO Ministerial in Seattle, organizers (not affiliated with Earth First!) developed a broadsheet to share a grassroots analysis of the WTO and its agenda for global corporatization. It was circulated to more than nine

²²² Pri Mitivist, “Earth First! in the Cities,” 98-99.

thousand activists in the *Earth First! Journal*, and fifty thousand more were distributed nationally.²²³

The strategy to disrupt the WTO negotiations in Seattle was based on blockading access to and from the meeting by shutting down key streets and intersections, much like access to forests have been blockaded by Earth First!. The city was “divided up like a pie and each affinity would take a slice, identify pivotal intersections and do their thing there.” Earth First!ers held blockading workshops to support affinities and also provided “back-up” roaming affinities who supported blockades targeted by police.²²⁴ Indeed, in preparation for, and during the Battle for Seattle, EF! played a critical role in sharing technologies for direct action with a larger, emergent alter-globalization movement in the US.²²⁵

Significance of Earth First!

This thesis has attempted to show how the culture of anarchism which permeated the Earth First! movement in the 1980s and early 1990s fostered the proliferation of direct action interventions against industrial destruction throughout the United States.

Chapter two highlighted how the use of an image politics in the forest combined with a

²²³ Stephanie Guilloud, “Spark, Fire, and Burning Coals.”

²²⁴ Frank, (NCEF! activist), in conversation with the author, October 2007. Affinity refers to a “small and autonomous group of anarchists, closely familiar to each other, who come together to undertake a specific action – whether in isolation or in collaboration with other affinity groups.” Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 15.

²²⁵ Pri Mitivist, “The Urbanization of Earth First!,” 98. While the blockading technologies for the WTO shutdown were shared by Earth First! activists, it should be noted that technologies for blockading delegations are a part of a deeper history of civil unrest in America, going back at least as far as the 1968 Democratic National Convention. In no ways do I mean to suggest that EF! invented technologies of civil disobedience, rather, I want to suggest that their refinement in the Pacific Northwest, was generated by the Earth First! network. North Coast Earth First! activists explicitly attribute the Civil Rights movement for introducing many forms of protest that they incorporated into radical environmental struggles. See: Roselle, *Tree Spiker*, for a good review of this history.

decentralized, anti-authoritarian, non-organizational structure encouraged EF! nodes to develop localized resistance to industrial destruction throughout the Western US. I demonstrated how the EF! ethos of direct action was matched by an oppositional system of information (the *Earth First! Journal*), through which activists were able to share grassroots research and debate environmental theory and practice. Furthermore, the innovation of EF! praxis was fostered by the annual encounters convened at the Round River Rendezvous gatherings. The RRR provided a critical space for geographically dispersed activists to meet in person in order to share strategies and tactics for direct action intervention against industrial destruction, to negotiate internal tensions and conflicts in person, and to lend concerted effort to a particular EF! project. This process continued initially in the base camps during a proliferation of direct action campaigns and culminated in the Redwood Summers of 1990-1994.

Limits of EF!

While the founders of Earth First! offered a critical break with mainstream environmentalism by challenging industrial supremacy through image events that linked human and non-human interests, they simultaneously reproduced industrial culture by advocating misanthropic, Euro-centric, and misogynist interpretations of deep ecology. Preoccupied with wilderness preservationism, Earth First! initially espoused a fundamentalist ecology offering solutions to global environmental crises that placed the burden of planetary survival on the sterilization, famine and material deprivation of the

Third World and low-income communities, who have played insignificant roles in planetary destruction.²²⁶

Contributions of NCEF!

In chapter three, I reviewed how Judi Bari's theory of revolutionary ecology linked the domination of nature with the domination of people through the imposition of work along with capitalist discipline, as NCEF! made significant interventions against fundamentalist tendencies within the larger EF! movement, and shifted radical environmental praxis toward what Jonathan London termed a post-wilderness environmentalism, transcending pre-occupation with wilderness preservation and situating human communities within conceptions of nature. As a theoretical framework, revolutionary ecology offers an interpretation of deep ecology which addresses ecological concerns of consumption, feminist concerns around reproductive health and well-being, as well as challenges to private property and a refusal of current racial and gender formations. Furthermore, it facilitates collective imagination of places where ecological and psychological healing can converge through lives full of dignified work.²²⁷

Chapter Three demonstrated how NCEF!'s shift in the language of resistance to include a critique of capitalist domination of people and nature. Chapter Four explored how this shift was animated through NCEF! music and highlighted by the incorporation of mass protest and civil disobedience into the political repertoire of direct action during Redwood Summer in Northern California. Furthermore, I argued that the socio-political

²²⁶ Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation," 71-83; Smith, *Conquest*, 59-64.

²²⁷ Bari, "Revolutionary Ecology."

space for NCEF! to seek and build alliances with timber workers in the midst of the Timber Wars, was created by the anti-authoritarian structure of the larger EF! movement. The decentralized, horizontally organized movement fostered reflexive oppositional systems of information, most notably at the base camps, which supported expedient incorporation of new knowledge into the political repertoire of the movement through skill-shares, allowing for critical changes in discourse and practice to be implemented quickly in an effort to avoid violence as much as possible in the forest.

Limits of NCEF!

Despite the institution of non-violent direct action into the Headwaters Campaign, violence, tensions, and antagonisms persisted between EF!ers and timber workers in Northern California (as evidenced by the bombing of Judi Bari and Darryl Cherney in 1990 and the murder of David “Gypsy” Chain in 1998). Whatever the intervention may be, all methods of direct action produce direct encounters between activists and people ‘outside’ the movement – people who might be considered the “opponent.”²²⁸ Both physical and symbolic direct action interventions create encounters between activists and local peoples and places. How NCEF! activists construct, interact and respond to these encounters reveals a dialectical engagement between local peoples and place.

The fundamental obstacle which NCEF! confronted during the Headwaters Campaign was that direct action encounters necessarily create antagonism, as they are poised to physically intervene in a dispute and to crystallize a theoretical and/or

²²⁸ The encounter between activists and others is what distinguishes between monkeywrenching, ecotage and direct action. For review of bombing of Bari and Cherney see Chapter 3. For review of murder of Chain see Chapter 4.

ideological disagreement physically. The process of identity formation inherent in collective meaning-construction should not be mis-construed as one-sided on the part of the activists engaging in direct action. Rather, as Stuart Hall argues, identity formation occurs along multiple axes, and as DeLuca argues, messages are read within infinite contexts of mediation.²²⁹ Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison argue that “social movements express shifts in the consciousness of actors as they are articulated in the interactions between activities and their opposition(s) in historically situated political and cultural contexts.”²³⁰ In other words, oppositional identities trans/form as the terrain of struggle constructed by each encounter shifts and positions various constituencies as “enemy” or “ally,” according to context.

Specifically, as direct action in/forms the activist identity, so too, does it motivate counter-insurgent identities. Reflecting on the weakening of new social movements, Chela Sandoval notes that Luis Althusser’s theory of “ideology and ideological state apparatuses” identified the problem of ideology and its ability to reinforce the status quo even in the midst of its negation, because it rigidly structures subjectivity. Building on Althusser’s theory of ideological subjectivity, Sandoval notes that the trick for liberation struggles is to undermine ideology’s ability to reinforce the status quo through *differential consciousness*. *Oppositional consciousness* is the ability to appropriate identity formation for explicit political purposes, and to embrace identity politics as a means for subject composition in social movement. Differential consciousness is the

²²⁹ Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity,” 595-694; DeLuca, *Image Politics*, 145.

²³⁰ Eyerman and Jamison, *Social Movements*, 4.

ability to “shift” between various oppositional identities strategically, and to form new identities in the process. This allows ideology to be subverted in the interest of social movement. For people in struggle, differential consciousness is the ability to appropriate oppositional identities strategically to suit their political interests in a given moment.²³¹

Whether conscious or subconscious the shift between identities that occurs for actors engaged in a conflict reveals the complex nature of social struggle. During encounters facilitated by direct action, the worker, who may have seen him/herself in opposition to Maxxam, Inc. (recall the statement against the Maxxam takeover published by PL workers), as an exploited laborer, then becomes the logger, who sees his/her work and lifestyle threatened by NCEF!. This is merely an example, but the point is, that as activist identities form, so do the identities of the counter-insurgent force. For NCEF!, the strategic reliance on direct action interventions in the forest meant that alliances with timber workers could not be fully realized, as the very nature of EF! praxis physically constituted the logger in opposition to the Headwaters Campaign.²³²

In the case of NCEF!, the counter-insurgency was well-funded by the timber industry, further fuelling conflict between timber workers and activists. For example, the Yellow Ribbon Campaign was launched in timber communities to show support for the timber industry. Workers were encouraged to display yellow ribbons on persons, homes, and vehicles in solidarity with the timber companies and in support of logging practices in general. Furthermore, the political economy of timber economies functions in such a

²³¹ Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 42-44.

²³² For an interesting exploration of the problems encountered between “activists” and lay people during direct actions see: Paul Chatterton, “‘Give up Activism’ and Change the World in Unknown Ways: Or Learning to Walk with Others on Uncommon Ground,” *Antipode* 38, no. 2 (2006): 259-281.

way that timber interests are privileged by local politicians, media, and institutions, distorting the reality of forest practices, ecological devastation, and activist intentions in favor of timber interests.²³³ The success of timber hegemony on the North Coast played a major role in limiting the ability of NCEF! activists to form broader coalitions with timber workers. Finally, NCEF! activists were not able to connect with timber workers culturally on a wide-scale.²³⁴

Blue-Green Alliances

In 1993, Judi Bari and NCEF! proposed a sustainable forestry initiative in the Headwaters Forest in an attempt to overcome the conundrum of direct action interventions in the forest. Sustainable forestry precludes the necessity for logging road blockades and simultaneously addresses the need for dignified work within human communities. In 1997, the Headwaters Stewardship Plan, generated collaboratively by

²³³ One example of how the political economies of timber communities is dominated by timber interests is the formation of the Yellow Ribbon Coalition which was launched in 1989 in Northern California by the founders of the so-called “Wise Use” or “Multiple Use” Movement in the United States. The Yellow Ribbon Coalition was supposedly a “grassroots” timber worker organization, however, it was heavily financed by the timber industry. The primary role of the Yellow Ribbon Coalition was to demonstrate support for timber industry and opposition to environmentalists (and environmental protections) through “flying” yellow ribbons on homes and vehicles. For a detailed review see Widick, *Trouble in the Forests*, 238-245. Judi Bari notes that in some small timber communities it was “dangerous not to fly” the ribbons. Bari, *Timber Wars*, 13. Furthermore, the public hostility toward environmentalists which timber industry elite within the Wise Use movement were able to generate in Northern California is evidenced by the misrepresentation of the incident in 1987 where the mill worker George Alexander was maimed by a saw blade which hit a nail in a log he was processing. Local law enforcement and state media intentionally distorted the incident in such a way that despite lack of any evidence tying NCEF! to the incident, they were widely viewed as the culprits. See Bari, *Timber Wars*, 106, 111, 264-267.

²³⁴ All of my interviews with NCEF! activists, as well as conversations with present day Forest Defenders support this statement.

PL workers and NCEF!ers, called for a restoration economy based on preservation, restoration and sustainable forestry.²³⁵

In 1999, the Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment (ASJE) was instituted by Headwaters activists and resource workers employed by Maxxam, as the formal coalition between labor and environmentalists in the Pacific Northwest. Its realization is attributed to the work of blue-green alliance building during the Headwaters Campaign and later from joint preparations for the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle.²³⁶ Its mission is to promote a world “where nature is protected, the worker is respected, and unrestrained corporate power is rejected through grassroots organizing, education, and action.”²³⁷ Its formation and participation in the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle are perhaps its greatest achievements.

In the decade since the demonstrations against the WTO, blue-green collaboration has declined in the Pacific Northwest. Indeed, the political force of today’s blue-green alliance in Humboldt County seems impoverished. A 2004 study conducted by Mark Baker, documents the progress of the restoration economy in Humboldt County and the creation of 300 jobs. However, Baker also notes, that this number is rather small compared to the jobs and revenues generated by the timber industry prior to its decline.²³⁸ These numbers indicate that despite the formation of the ASJE, there has not been

²³⁵ Bari, “But What About Jobs?” (originally published in 1993, revised in 1996) reprinted in: Trees Foundation, “The Headwaters Forest Stewardship Plan,” Trees Foundation, <http://www.treesfoundation.org/affiliates/30/pdfs/HFSP.pdf> (accessed December 11, 2008), 76.

²³⁶ Lee, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September, 2007; Frank, (NCEF! organizer), in discussion with the author, September, 2007.

²³⁷ Alliance for Sustainable Jobs and the Environment, “History of ASJE.”

²³⁸ Baker, “Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Natural Resources Restoration System in Humboldt County, California,” 8.

enough structural adjustment to accommodate a viable restoration economy in Northern California and meet the needs of a large transitioning resource workforce in a sustainable way. Furthermore, it is unclear to what extent the institutionalized alliance of the ASJE has been able to foster a sense of community between environmentalists and (displaced) timber workers, despite the fact that the organization is composed of labor and environmental leaders.²³⁹

One explanation for the ASJE's inability to maintain the labor/environmental coalition results from its formation as a non-profit organization within the *non-profit industrial complex*. The situated knowledge that generated its formation and its strategic mobilization against the WTO has been virtually eliminated. Grassroots ties and expertise have been replaced by official expert reporting in order to obtain grants and meet funding requirements. Clearly research is necessary to our understanding of the politico-economic terrain of struggle, but when expert reports become the sole source of information and purpose of an organization, they *replace* forums for critical dialogue

²³⁹ In March 2007, I attended a workshop titled "Bankruptcy 101: Understanding the Pacific Lumber Chapter 11 Case" convened by the ASJE. Approximately 100 Pacific Lumber employees/sub-contractors and a handful of local environmental activists from a spectrum of organizations came together in a public forum in Fortuna, California. The workshop was billed as a space specifically for people affected by the bankruptcy, in particular employed and retired PL workers. It was repeatedly emphasized by the organizers that it would not be a "Palco-bashing" session, meaning the focus would not be on "how we got here" but on what was happening at the time. Later, it was celebrated by director, Tracy Katelman, as "an historic occasion." Katelman claimed "we were able to bring together Humboldt neighbors who've been at odds for decades and find common ground to navigate our way through this trying time." As historic as the workshop may have been, the space itself was stifling. The rigid facilitation strategy precluded meaningful discussion between the diverse constituencies present. Unfortunately, the atmosphere of the workshop seemed to highlight the history of antagonism. There was more tension between labor and environmentalists in the room than solidarity. Tracy Katelman, public email, February 27, 2007; Mike Lovelace (Executive Director, Humboldt Watershed Council), quoted by: John Driscoll. "Bankruptcy 101," in *The Times-Standard*, February 27, 2007, http://www.times-standard.com/local/ci_5314032 (accessed on December 21, 2008). Tracy Katelman, "Pacific Lumber Bankruptcy," *Riodeltimes.com*, <http://www.riodeltimes.com/PacificLumberBankruptcy/> (accessed December 21, 2008).

between diverse constituencies and the ability for reflexive and strategic movement innovation becomes stifled. The investment in “administrative rationalism” directly coincides with the professionalization of the environmental movement. These institutionalized apparatuses are incapable of meeting the needs of diverse constituencies and obscure the work being done, or that which needs to be done, to mobilize a significant political force in opposition to industrial destruction.²⁴⁰

Indeed, EF!’s legacy of dis/non-organization is one which avoided bureaucratic calcification, instead encouraging constant dialogue, engagement, and innovation between people who would otherwise, and at times did, face-off as enemies. This thesis has attempted to show the utility of anarchist horizontal praxis and a politics of encounter that privileges learning as part of a larger process of community regeneration. Increasingly, portions of social movement in the United States are caught up in the non-profit industrial complex and perpetual cycles of funding and reporting. By linking the story of Earth First! and the dramatic shift toward a post-wilderness environmentalism deployed by North Coast Earth First! to the explosive shut down of the WTO negotiations in 1999 Seattle, I have attempted to highlight the creative nature of passionate people and the potential for impact in our communities. Furthermore, I argue that the decentralized nature of EF! organization in the context of the success of the Headwaters Campaign in generating so much public support during Redwood Summer, is

²⁴⁰ Rodriguez, “The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,” 21-40. Dryzek, “Leave It to the Experts,” 75-98.

contrary to the massive funding structures and bureaucratic organization which the bulk of the mainstream environmental movement is founded upon.

There is ample room for more study of the changes in EF! since the Redwood Summers. However, a cursory review of articles within the *Earth First! Journal* reveals a significant shift away from emphasis on pristine wilderness, and rather increasing interventions around neoliberal destruction. Not only did Earth First! participate in the Battle for Seattle, but the *Earth First! Journal* published articles leading up to the protest that elaborated a critical analysis of the role of international finance capital and its restructuring of global governance structures. In 2006, as the war on immigrants in the United States heightened, the Lughnasadh issue of the *Earth First! Journal* was devoted to an analysis of migration as a natural right.²⁴¹ It included an extensive article titled, “Down with Borders, Up with Spring!” which offered a scathing critique of the US-Mexico border, migration policy, and anti-immigrant sentiments within the radical environmental movement declaring:

We need to keep our eyes peeled, because this isn't just a debate on immigration and borders anymore. A fascist tendency is on the rise in this country. Be assured, no matter what any scholarly conservation biologist might say, racist repression will not be beneficial for the environment, and neutrality will not be an option.²⁴²

Clearly, Earth First! has come a long way from its initial prominent anti-migration, close-the-border-and-enforce-global-population-control rhetoric. Judi Bari's theory of

²⁴¹ The Introduction to the *Earth First! Reader* explains that the use of pagan holidays such as “Lughnasadh” was used to name the issues of the *Earth First! Journal* to correspond with major seasonal events. See: Davis, *The Earth First! Reader*, 13.

²⁴² Panagioti. “Down with Borders, Up with Spring,” 9.

“revolutionary ecology” carved critical space for the movement to learn and move toward a post-wilderness environmentalism. Earth First!’s horizontal structure, grassroots systems of information, and political culture of anti-authoritarianism ensured the movement was not overly weighed down by ideological commitments to a “pure” conservationism. Furthermore, the political practice of generating movement encounters at base camps and Round River Rendezvous created opportunities for the movement to learn, grow, and generate more force to stop industrial destruction.

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