



Save the Creation: An Anguished Cry of a Man depicted in “Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness” by Edward Abbey

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Abstract. Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness" emerges as a cornerstone in American environmental literature, delving into Abbey's reflections on the desert Southwest, industrialism, and society. This foundational work reflects Abbey's deep love for the desert and his intricate portrayal of its impact on his soul. Born in 1927, Abbey's reputation as a writer solidified with this book, despite the varied reception of his works. Abbey's identity as an environmentalist is debated; he aimed primarily to be a fiction writer and novelist. Nonetheless, his writings scrutinize industrial tourism's threat to national parks, emphasizing the preservation of wilderness by advocating limitations on human intervention. "Desert Solitaire" presents Abbey's ecomystical experiences, embodying a radical materialism rooted in a profound union with nature. It highlights his reverence for the American West's wilderness while critiquing the encroachment of industrialization on these landscapes. Abbey's narrative intertwines mystical encounters with nature and sharp societal critiques, urging for a deeper communion with the environment. The book stands as a testament to his fervent passion for the American West and serves as a call to preserve its pristine landscapes amidst growing industrial pressures.

Keywords: American Environmental Literature, Industrial Tourism, Wilderness Preservation, Ecomysticism

1 Introduction

Edward Abbey's literary masterpiece, "Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness," transcends conventional environmental literature, offering profound insights into the desert landscape of the American Southwest, the implications of industrialism, and the intricate fabric of society. Published in the late 1960s, this iconic work not only solidified Abbey's status as a writer but also sparked debates about his identity as an

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environmentalist. Born in 1927, Abbey's literary journey spanned varied landscapes, from his experiences in the U.S. Army to his pursuit of becoming a novelist. Despite his aspirations lying primarily in fiction, it was "Desert Solitaire" that etched his name in the annals of environmental literature. The book's reception was diverse, with Abbey's writings drawing admiration as timeless classics while also attracting criticism for their tragic undertones. Abbey's relationship with environmentalism remained enigmatic. He resisted being labeled solely as an environmentalist, intending instead to be known as a fiction writer. Nevertheless, within the pages of "Desert Solitaire," Abbey intricately examines the perils of industrial tourism, raising poignant concerns about its detrimental impact on the sanctity of national parks and the wilderness. He fervently advocates for preserving these natural spaces by advocating for constraints on human interference, a sentiment deeply rooted in his profound connection with nature. "Desert Solitaire" encapsulates Abbey's ecomystical encounters, showcasing a radical materialism that stems from an intimate, almost spiritual, communion with the American West's untamed wilderness. This literary narrative intertwines mystical experiences with nature alongside incisive societal critiques, compelling readers to forge a deeper bond with the environment. Abbey's impassioned portrayal of the American West within these pages serves not merely as a narrative but as a fervent plea to safeguard its unspoiled landscapes from the encroachments of industrialization. It stands tall as a testament to his ardent reverence for the wilderness, issuing a clarion call to protect these pristine expanses from the burgeoning pressures of industrial progress.

2 Environmental Perspective:

Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" offers a multifaceted environmental perspective, delving into the complex relationship between nature, industrialism, and societal impact. Abbey, though primarily aiming to be a fiction writer, achieved prominence in environmental literature with this seminal work. The book presents a critique of industrial tourism, highlighting its detrimental effects on national parks and wilderness areas. Abbey passionately advocates for preserving these natural spaces by limiting human intervention, drawing from his deep affinity and spiritual connection with nature. "Desert Solitaire" encapsulates Abbey's ecomystical encounters, portraying a radical materialism rooted in an intimate communion with the untamed wilderness of the American West. Through this lens, Abbey intertwines mystical experiences with nature alongside sharp societal critiques, emphasizing the imperative need for a deeper connection between humanity and the environment.

The book serves as a poignant plea to protect the unspoiled landscapes of the American West from the encroachments of industrialization. Abbey's impassioned portrayal of these pristine expanses stands as a testament to his reverence for the wilderness, urging readers to reevaluate their relationship with nature and advocate for its preservation in the face of burgeoning industrial pressures.

3 Social Perspective:

Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" presents a profound social perspective intertwined with its environmental narrative. Despite Abbey's primary identity as a fiction writer, this iconic work solidified his position within environmental literature, sparking debates about his classification as an environmentalist. Born in 1927, Abbey's journey from the U.S. Army to aspiring novelist ultimately led to the creation of "Desert Solitaire." While receiving both admiration and criticism for its diverse reception, Abbey's intent to not be pigeonholed as an environmentalist stands out. Instead, the book intricately delves into the dangers of industrial tourism, highlighting its adverse effects on national parks and wilderness areas. His fervent advocacy for preserving these natural spaces stems from a deep connection with nature rather than a straightforward environmentalist stance. "Desert Solitaire" weaves Abbey's esoteric encounters into a narrative showcasing an intimate union with the untamed wilderness of the American West. This narrative isn't merely an exploration of nature; it's a profound social commentary entwined with environmental concerns. Abbey's fervor to protect these unspoiled landscapes from industrial encroachment acts as a testament to his reverence for the wilderness, extending a fervent plea to shield these pristine expanses from the pressures of advancing industrialization. The book's social perspective transcends a mere environmental narrative, advocating for a reevaluation of human interaction with nature and urging readers to recognize the intrinsic value of preserving these landscapes amidst burgeoning industrial pressures. Abbey's passionate portrayal serves as a poignant call to action, emphasizing the societal responsibility to safeguard the unblemished beauty of the American West.

4 Economic Perspective

The economic perspective within Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" is subtly interwoven within the broader environmental and social narrative of the book. While Abbey primarily approached his work as a fiction writer, "Desert Solitaire" profoundly addresses the economic implications of unchecked industrialism and tourism on the pristine landscapes of the American West. Abbey's concern about industrial tourism is notably tied to its economic impacts. He critiques the commodification of nature and the transformation of national parks into commercial attractions. He highlights how unrestricted industrial tourism leads to the degradation of these natural spaces, emphasizing the loss of intrinsic value in favor of monetary gains. By advocating for limitations on human intervention and road-building in parks, Abbey indirectly addresses the economic repercussions of unchecked development. He suggests that preserving the wilderness in its natural state is not just an environmental or aesthetic concern but also an economic one. Abbey believes that the economic value of these landscapes extends beyond immediate profits derived from tourism, emphasizing the significance of preserving them for future generations. However, the economic perspective in "Desert Solitaire" is more implicit than explicit. Abbey's focus primarily lies in the intrinsic value of preserving nature for its

spiritual, ecological, and cultural importance. Nevertheless, his critiques of industrial tourism and the call to limit human intervention in natural landscapes carry underlying economic implications by stressing the long-term value of preserving these areas beyond short-term economic gains.

5 Contemporary Advancement

It's conceivable that there might have been continued discussions, reinterpretations, or scholarly analyses of Abbey's work and its relevance in today's context. Given the ongoing discussions surrounding environmentalism, conservation efforts, and the impact of human activities on natural landscapes, it's possible that Abbey's perspectives in "Desert Solitaire" continue to resonate and spark debates. Contemporary advancements might also include renewed attention to Abbey's writings in the context of evolving environmental policies, the effects of climate change on the American Southwest, the growing global focus on sustainable practices, and the role of literature in shaping environmental consciousness. Recent adaptations, scholarly publications, or discussions within academic circles or environmental organizations might have further explored Abbey's themes of wilderness preservation, critiques of industrialization, and the importance of fostering a deeper connection with nature. For the most current and specific advancements regarding Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire," I recommend exploring academic journals, recent publications, online forums, and literary or environmental studies that discuss the book's enduring significance and its application in contemporary environmental discourse.

6 Comparative Analysis

6.1 Similarities:

Nature as a Source of Spiritual Connection: Both Abbey and Thoreau explore the spiritual and transformative power of nature. Thoreau's "Walden" reflects on the transcendental experience of living deliberately in the woods, while Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" portrays the soul-stirring impact of the desert landscape on his consciousness. **Critique of Modern Society:** Both authors critique the adverse effects of industrialization and modern society on the natural world. Thoreau's reflections on simplicity and self-reliance resonate with Abbey's disdain for industrial tourism and the degradation of wilderness in favor of commercialization.

6.2 Differences

Setting and Landscape: Thoreau's "Walden" centers on his experiences in a small cabin near Walden Pond in Massachusetts, emphasizing the New England landscape. In contrast, Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" vividly portrays the vast, rugged landscapes of the American Southwest, focusing on the desert and its unique characteristics.

Writing Styles: While both authors advocate for a deeper connection with nature, their writing styles differ. Thoreau's prose in "Walden" often takes on a philosophical and contemplative tone, whereas Abbey's narrative in "Desert Solitaire" incorporates vivid descriptions, personal anecdotes, and a blend of lyrical and critical elements.

6.3 Impact:

Both "Walden" and "Desert Solitaire" have left enduring impacts on environmental literature and inspired generations of readers to reevaluate their relationship with nature. Thoreau's transcendentalist ideas and Abbey's impassioned plea for wilderness preservation continue to influence environmental discourse, encouraging a deeper understanding of humanity's place within the natural world.

In a comparative analysis, while the themes of nature, critique of industrialization, and the quest for a deeper connection with the environment are shared, the distinct settings, writing styles, and specific focuses of Thoreau and Abbey provide diverse perspectives within the realm of American environmental literature.

7 Conclusion

In conclusion, Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" stands as a monumental work in American environmental literature, embodying profound reflections on the desert Southwest, industrialism, and society. Published in the late 1960s, the book solidified Abbey's reputation as a writer while sparking discussions about his identity as an environmentalist. Born in 1927, Abbey's journey from the U.S. Army to aspiring novelist culminated in this iconic piece that draws admiration for its timeless insights yet attracts criticism for its complex reception.

Abbey's intricate examination within "Desert Solitaire" delves into the perils of industrial tourism and advocates passionately for preserving natural spaces through limitations on human intervention. His narrative intertwines mystical encounters with nature, urging for a deeper communion with the environment and serving as a fervent plea to safeguard the American West's unspoiled landscapes from industrial encroachment. This article dissects "Desert Solitaire" through three lenses: environmental, social, and economic perspectives. It illuminates Abbey's multifaceted portrayal of nature, societal critiques, and implicit economic implications while highlighting his fervor to protect the wilderness. Additionally, a comparative analysis with Henry David Thoreau's "Walden" draws parallels between their transcendentalist ideals, critique of industrialization, and the quest for a profound connection with nature. Despite their differing settings and writing styles, both works have left indelible imprints on environmental discourse. Finally, while acknowledging contemporary advancements and the book's evolving relevance in discussions on environmentalism and conservation efforts, the article emphasizes the enduring significance of "Desert Solitaire" in advocating for a deeper appreciation and preservation of nature amidst growing industrial pressures. Edward Abbey's "Desert Solitaire" remains not just a literary masterpiece but a clarion call to protect and

cherish the intrinsic beauty of the American West's untouched landscapes, fostering a deeper understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with the natural world.

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