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Nature, what is left of it, that is, serves as a bitter reminder of how deformed, non-sensual, and fraudulent is contemporary existence. The death of the natural world and the technological penetration of every sphere of life, what is left of it, proceed with an accelerating impetus. Wired, Mondo 2000, zippies, cyber-everything, virtual reality, Artificial Intelligence, on and on, up to and including Artificial Life, the ultimate postmodern science.

Meanwhile, however, our "post-industrial" computer age has resulted in the fact that we are more than ever "appendages to the machine", as the 19th century phrase had it. Bureau of Justice statistics (7/94), by the way, report that the increasingly computer-surveilled workplace is now the setting for nearly one million violent crimes per year, and that the number of murdered bosses has doubled in the past decade.

This hideous arrangement expects, in its arrogance, that its victims will somehow remain content to vote, recycle, and pretend it will all be fine. To employ a line from Debord, "The spectator is simply supposed to know nothing and deserve nothing."

Civilization, technology, and a divided social order are the components of an indissoluble whole; a death-trip that is fundamentally hostile to qualitative difference. Our answer must be qualitative, not the quantitative more-of-the-same palliatives that actually reinforce what we must end.

Actions Speak Louder Than Words (1998)

Every morning when I wake up I ask myself whether I should write or blow up a dam. I tell myself I should keep writing, though I'm not sure that's right. I've written books and done activism, but it is neither a lack of words nor a lack of activism that is killing salmon here in the Northwest. It's the dams.

Anyone who knows anything about salmon knows the dams must go. Anyone who knows anything about politics knows the dams will stay. Scientists study, politicians and business people lie and delay, bureaucrats hold sham public meetings, activists write letters and press releases, and still the salmon die.

Sadly enough, I'm not alone in my inability or unwillingness to take action. Members of the German resistance to Hitler from 1933 to 1945, for example, exhibited a striking blindness all too familiar: Despite knowing that Hitler had to be removed for a "decent" government to be installed, they spent more time creating paper versions of this theoretical government than attempting to remove him from power. It wasn't a lack of courage that caused this blindness but rather a misguided sense of morals. Karl Goerdeler, for instance, though tireless in attempting to create this new government, staunchly opposed assassinating Hitler, believing that if only the two could sit face to face Hitler might relent.

We, too, suffer from this blindness and must learn to differentiate between real and false hopes. We must eliminate false hopes, which blind us to real possibilities. Does anyone really believe our protests will cause Weyerhaeuser or other timber transnationals to

stop destroying forests? Does anyone really believe the same corporate administrators who say they "wish salmon would go extinct so we could just get on with living" (Randy Hardy of Bonneville Power Association) will act other than to fulfill their desires? Does anyone really believe a pattern of exploitation as old as our civilization can be halted legislatively, judicially or through means other than an absolute rejection of the mindset that engineers the exploitation, followed by actions based on that rejection? Does anybody really think those who are destroying the world will stop because we ask nicely or because we lock arms peacefully in front of their offices?

There can be few who still believe the purpose of government is to protect citizens from the activities of those who would destroy. The opposite is true:

Political economist Adam Smith was correct in noting that the primary purpose of government is to protect those who run the economy from the outrage of injured citizens. To expect institutions created by our culture to do other than poison waters, denude hillsides, eliminate alternative ways of living and commit genocide is unforgivably naive.

Many German conspirators hesitated to remove Hitler from office because they'd sworn loyalty to him and his government. Their scruples caused more hesitation than their fear. How many of us have yet to root out misguided remnants of a belief in the legitimacy of this government to which, as children, we pledged allegiance? How many of us fail to cross the line into violent resistance because we still believe that, somehow, the system can be reformed? And if we don't believe that, what are we waiting for? As Shakespeare so accurately put it, "Conscience doth make cowards of us all."

It could be argued that by comparing our government to Hitler's I'm overstating my case. I'm not sure salmon would agree, nor lynx, nor the people of Peru, Irian Jaya, Indonesia, or any other place where people pay with their lives for the activities of our culture.

be whole/enlightened/healed within the present madness amounts to endorsing the madness.

The gap between rich and poor is widening markedly in this land of the homeless and the imprisoned. Anger rises and massive denial, cornerstone of the system's survival, is now at least having a troubled sleep. A false world is beginning to get the amount of support it deserves: distrust of public institutions is almost total. But the social landscape seems frozen and the pain of youth is perhaps the greatest of all. It was recently announced (10/94) that the suicide rate among young men ages 15 to 19 more than doubled between 1985 and 1991. Teen suicide is the response of a growing number who evidently cannot imagine maturity in such a place as this.

The overwhelmingly pervasive culture is a fast-food one, bereft of substance or promise. As Dick Hebdige aptly judged, "the postmodern is the modern without the hopes and dreams that made modernity bearable." Postmodernism advertises itself as pluralistic, tolerant, and non-dogmatic. In practice it is a superficial, fast-forward, deliberately confused, fragmented, media-obsessed, illiterate, fatalistic, uncritical excrescence, indifferent to questions of origins, agency, history or causation. It questions nothing of importance and is the perfect expression of a setup that is stupid and dying and wants to take us with it.

Our postmodern epoch finds its bottom-line expression in consumerism and technology, which combine in the stupefying force of mass media. Attention-getting, easily-digested images and phrases distract one from the fact that this horror-show of domination is precisely held together by such entertaining, easily digestible images and phrases. Even the grossest failures of society can be used to try to narcotize its subjects, as with the case of violence, a source of endless diversion. We are titillated by the representation of what at the same time is threatening, suggesting that boredom is an even worse torment than fear.

Anti-Authoritarians Anonymous: "We Have To Dismantle All This" (1995)

The unprecedented reality of the present is one of enormous sorrow and cynicism, "a great tear in the human heart", as Richard Rodriguez put it. A time of ever-mounting everyday horrors, of which any newspaper is full, accompanies a spreading environmental apocalypse. Alienation and the more literal contaminants compete for the leading role in the deadly dialectic of life in divided, technology-ridden society. Cancer, unknown before civilization, now seems epidemic in a society increasingly barren and literally malignant.

Soon, apparently, everyone will be using drugs; prescription and illegal becoming a relatively unimportant distinction. Attention Deficit Disorder is one example of an oppressive effort to medicalize the rampant restlessness and anxiety caused by a life-world ever more shriveled and unfulfilling. The ruling order will evidently go to any lengths to deny social reality; its techno-psychiatry views human suffering as chiefly biological in nature and genetic in origin.

New strains of disease, impervious to industrial medicine, begin to spread globally while fundamentalism (Christian, Judaic, Islamic) is also on the rise, a sign of deeply-felt misery and frustration. And here at home New Age spirituality (Adorno's "philosophy for dunces") and the countless varieties of "healing" therapies wear thin in their delusional pointlessness. To assert that we can

If we're to survive, we must recognize that we kill by inaction as surely as by action. We must recognize that, as Hermann Hesse wrote, "We kill when we close our eyes to poverty, affliction or infamy. We kill when, because it is easier, we countenance, or pretend to approve of atrophied social, political, educational, and religious institutions, instead of resolutely combating them."

The central — and in many ways only — question of our time is this: What are sane, appropriate and effective responses to outrageously destructive behavior? So often, those working to slow the destruction can plainly describe the problems. Who couldn't? The problems are neither subtle nor cognitively challenging. Yet when faced with the emotionally daunting task of fashioning a response to these clearly insoluble problems, we generally suffer a failure of nerve and imagination. Gandhi wrote a letter to Hitler asking him to stop committing atrocities and was mystified that it didn't work. I continue writing letters to the editor of the local corporate newspaper pointing out mistruths and am continually surprised at the next absurdity.

I'm not suggesting a well-targeted program of assassinations would solve all of our problems. If it were that simple, I wouldn't be writing this essay. To assassinate Slade Gorton and Larry Craig, for example, two senators from the Northwest whose work may be charitably described as unremittingly ecocidal, would probably slow the destruction not much more than to write them a letter. Neither unique nor alone, Gorton and Craig are merely tools for enacting ecocide, as surely as are dams, corporations, chainsaws, napalm and nuclear weapons. If someone were to kill them, others would take their places. The ecocidal programs originating specifically from the damaged psyches of Gorton and Craig would die with them, but the shared nature of the impulses within our culture would continue full-force, making the replacement as easy as buying a new hoe.

Hitler, too, was elected as legally and "democratically" as Craig and Gorton. Hitler, too, manifested his culture's death urge bril-

liantly enough to capture the hearts of those who voted him into power and to hold the loyalty of the millions who actively carried out his plans. Hitler, like Craig and Gorton, like George Weyerhaeuser and other CEOs, didn't act alone. Why, then, do I discern a difference between them?

The current system has already begun to collapse under the weight of its ecological excesses, and here's where we can help. Having transferred our loyalty away from our culture's illegitimate economic and governmental entities and to the land, our goal must be to protect, through whatever means possible, the human and nonhuman residents of our homelands. Our goal, like that of a demolition crew on a downtown building, must be to help our culture collapse in place, so that in its fall it takes out as little life as possible.

Discussion presupposes distance, and the fact that we're talking about whether violence is appropriate tells me we don't yet care enough. There's a kind of action that doesn't emerge from discussion, from theory, but instead from our bodies and from the land. This action is the honeybee stinging to defend her hive; it's the mother grizzly charging a train to defend her cubs; it's Zapatista spokesperson Cecelia Rodriguez saying, "I have a question of those men who raped me. Why did you not kill me? It was a mistake to spare my life. I will not shut up — this has not traumatized me to the point of paralysis." It's Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, murdered by the Nigerian government at the urging of Shell, whose last words were, "Lord, take my soul, but the struggle continues!" It's those who participated in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. It's Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull and Geronimo. It's salmon battering themselves against concrete, using the only thing they have, their flesh, to try to break down that which keeps them from their homes.

I don't believe the question of whether to use violence is the right one. Instead, the question should be: Do you sufficiently feel the loss? So long as we discuss this in the abstract, we still have too much to lose. If we begin to feel in our bodies the immensity

and emptiness of what we lose daily: intact natural communities, hours sold for wages, childhoods lost to violence, women's capacity to walk unafraid, we'll know precisely what to do.[1]

[1] Appeared in *Earth First! Journal*, May-June 1998, p. 5