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THE CONSTRUCTION CIVIL RESISTANCE UPON PERCEIVED UNSUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE IN EDWARD ABBEY'S THE MONKEY WRENCH GANG: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Abstract
This study aims to identify central themes and analyze the construction of civil conflict in the novel The Monkey Wrench Gang. The novel depicts civil conflict as a form of resistance against infrastructure development, which is built through environmental degradation, political oppression, and moral dilemmas of resistance. To explore this, this study applies a discourse analysis framework supported by Julia Kristeva's concepts of suprasegmental and intertextuality. The suprasegmental aspect is analyzed through Jan Renkema's psycholinguistic approach, integrating Mandler and Johnson's story grammar theory to analyze narrative structure. Intertextuality is explored to reveal how the novel's discourse connects to broader socio-political and ecological realities, through the lens of James Paul Gee's discourse, language, identity, and the social dynamics of the characters are critically analyzed to reveal that civil resistance is not only a political or environmental act, but also a moral struggle—where characters must choose between personal ethics and destructive resistance. This research contributes to education by encouraging critical engagement with literature to understand ecological resistance, civic responsibility, and moral complexity. It provides insights into how fiction can shape environmental awareness and challenges learners to reflect on justice, activism, and human impact through discourse.
Keywords: Discourse analysis, Environmental, resistance, Infrastructure, Civil conflict.

Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tema sentral dan menganalisis konstruksi konflik sipil dalam novel The Monkey Wrench Gang. Novel ini menggambarkan konflik sipil sebagai bentuk perlawanan terhadap pembangunan infrastruktur, yang dibangun melalui degradasi lingkungan, penindasan politik, dan dilema moral perlawanan. Untuk mengeksplorasi hal ini, penelitian ini menerapkan kerangka analisis wacana yang didukung oleh konsep-konsep Julia Kristeva tentang suprasegmental dan intertekstualitas. Aspek suprasegmental dianalisis melalui pendekatan psikolinguistik Jan Renkema, dengan mengintegrasikan teori story grammar Mandler dan Johnson untuk menganalisis struktur naratif. Intertekstualitas dieksplorasi untuk mengungkap bagaimana diskursus novel terhubung dengan realitas sosial-politik dan ekologi yang lebih luas, melalui lensa diskursus James Paul Gee, bahasa, identitas, dan dinamika sosial karakter dianalisis secara kritis untuk mengungkapkan bahwa perlawanan sipil bukan hanya tindakan politik atau lingkungan, tetapi juga perjuangan moral—di mana karakter harus memilih antara etika pribadi dan perlawanan yang merusak. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pendidikan dengan mendorong keterlibatan kritis terhadap sastra untuk memahami perlawanan ekologis, tanggung jawab sipil, dan kompleksitas moral. Penelitian ini memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana fiksi dapat membentuk kesadaran lingkungan dan menantang pembelajar untuk merefleksikan keadilan, aktivisme, dan dampak manusia melalui diskursus.
Kata kunci: Analisis Wacana, Lingkungan, Perlawanan, Infrastruktur, Konflik Sipil

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BACKGROUND

Literature is a powerful medium for developing critical thinking, cultural awareness, and reflection on societal issues. In language learning, novels enhance linguistic competence while exposing learners to moral, environmental, and social themes. Mitsigkas (2017) emphasizes that analyzing novels fosters understanding of global issues and layered language use. Edward Abbey's The Monkey Wrench Gang invites readers to explore environmental degradation and resistance, highlighting the need for analytical tools to examine how language conveys deeper ideological meanings.

This study operates under the broader framework of discourse in literature, branching into two analytical dimensions derived from Kristeva's suprasegmental and intertextual analysis. The suprasegmental dimension is approached through the psycholinguistic narrative structure theory developed by Mandler and Johnson, as adapted by Renkema (2004), which is used to analyze how narrative elements—such as settings, plot, and episodes—form a cohesive story that builds toward resistance. This structural mapping highlights how acts of sabotage in the novel contribute to its critique of modernization. Meanwhile, the intertextual dimension is examined through The analytical framework based on Gee's (2011) approach, which sees language as performing acts of saying, doing, and being. Through this lens, the novel's language becomes a tool of resistance—critiquing capitalism, calling for sabotage, and shaping radical environmentalist identities. Kristeva's concept of intertextuality (1980) further shows how the narrative draws from cultural traditions of civil disobedience, embedding its resistance within a broader socio-political dialogue. Together, these approaches reveal how civil conflict is discursively constructed in The Monkey Wrench Gang.

Recent studies show how literature and discourse model environmental resistance. Dunlap and Jakobsen (2020) reveal that extractive industries often displace communities, sparking grassroots resistance similar to Abbey's depiction of direct action. Vos (2024) observes a shift from mass protests to local, sustained activism, reflecting the gang's small-scale sabotage. Powell (2024) highlights emotional and spiritual bonds with nature as drivers of resistance, resonating with Abbey's narrative and characters. Martinez (2021) links the novel to Earth First! and its lasting influence on radical movements, while Manson (2024) questions the ethics of eco-sabotage, a moral tension mirrored in Abbey's complex protagonists. Büscher and Fletcher (2020) propose "convivial conservation," critiquing industrial conservation models—an idea in line with Abbey's anti-industrial stance. Satheesh (2021) emphasizes indigenous discourse as a form of nonviolent resistance rooted in identity and memory. In addition, McTaggart (2020) traces the influence of The Monkey Wrench Gang on the formation of the radical environmental movement Earth First!, showing how literary texts can spark real action in the social world. This research confirms that Abbey's work is not only fiction but also serves as a catalyst for ecological resistance. The novel's relevance to environmental and political issues makes it an appropriate object for analysis through a discourse approach, particularly in examining how narratives of resistance are formed and conveyed through language.

While various studies explore environmental resistance—from media and poetry to local activism—few analyze how fiction constructs such resistance through language. Novels like The Monkey Wrench Gang remain underexamined in how they use discourse to shape activist identities and frame infrastructure as conflict. Though Öberg (2008) links natural resource struggles to global civil conflicts, the connection between literary resistance and real-world environmental struggles remains largely unexplored. Abbey's novel thus offers insight not only as literature but as political discourse reflecting global resistance patterns.

In response to these gaps, this study is guided by two main aims. The first aim examines the central theme of resistance in Edward Abbey's The Monkey Wrench Gang. The second aim investigates how civil conflict is constructed through the novel's narrative and discourse.

METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method under the broader framework of discourse in literature, focusing on two analytical dimensions derived by Kristeva's suprasegmental and intertextual analysis. The suprasegmental aspect is analyzed using the psycholinguistic story structure proposed by Mandler and Johnson (1977), while the intertextual analysis is examined through Gee's (2011) discourse technique.

Data collection begins with close reading to identify passages—such as settings, triggering events, and resolutions—related to resistance against resource exploitation. Relevant quotations are noted with context and initial interpretation. Non-relevant lines are excluded, while selected data are reorganized into a storyline and event diagram to clarify the narrative pattern.

This study operates under the broader framework of discourse in literature, branching into two analytical dimensions derived by Kristeva's suprasegmental and intertextual analysis. The suprasegmental dimension is approached through the psycholinguistic narrative structure theory developed by Mandler and Johnson, as adapted by Renkema, which is used to analyze how narrative elements such as settings and episodes, giving a clear view of the main story. Meanwhile, the intertextual dimension is examined through Gee's framework to uncover how meanings are constructed across texts and social contexts, showing how the novel connects to broader social and political discourse. Together, these approaches enable the study to reveal how civil conflict is discursively constructed in The Monkey Wrench Gang.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Addressing the first research question, this study examines how resistance is represented in The Monkey Wrench Gang through narrative structure, character development, and language. It applies Kristeva's concept of suprasegmental analysis, which is analyzed using the psycholinguistic approach of Mandler and Johnson's story grammar as adapted by Renkema.

Setting and Beginning

The Monkey Wrench Gang is set in the American Southwest during the 1970s, when large industrial projects—dams, highways, and mines—threaten fragile ecosystems. These developments, driven by government and corporate interests, ignoring environmental harm and the rights of local communities. The four main characters, already aware of the system's corruption, do not attempt legal reform. Instead, disillusioned by the failures of lawsuits and activism in the past, they form The Monkey Wrench Gang and commit to sabotage as a direct response to ecological destruction.

Complex Reaction (Simple Reaction and Goal)

Starting with small acts of sabotage like burning billboards and damaging bulldozers, the gang's resistance quickly grows under the guidance of Hayduke, who teaches them guerrilla tactics. Their escalating actions attract police attention, but the group understands that minor sabotage won't stop the relentless industrial expansion. They need a bigger, more symbolic target to make a real impact. That target becomes the Glen Canyon Dam — a powerful symbol of industrial control over nature and a source of massive environmental destruction. By focusing on the dam, their struggle becomes more than just physical disruption; it transforms into a moral battle against ecological harm and institutional oppression.

Goal Path (Attempt and Outcome)

With renewed determination, the gang carries out riskier operations, such as sabotaging railroad tracks and setting fire to heavy equipment. However, as Hayduke becomes more radical, doubts begin to surface among other members like Doc and Bonnie, who question whether the escalating violence is sustainable or justified. Meanwhile, law enforcement closes in, forcing the gang to hide deep in the wilderness. When they get close to destroying the dam, fear and the pressure of the police chase cause some members to waver. Doc and Bonnie choose to retreat for their safety, while Seldom Seen returns to his previous life as a tour guide, though he remains deeply committed to protecting nature. Hayduke continues the fight alone but eventually disappears after a police pursuit, leaving his fate uncertain but his spirit alive.

Ending

Though presumed dead, Hayduke becomes a symbol of ongoing resistance. The novel ends by affirming that as long as environmental exploitation continues, resistance will persist. While some characters return to quieter lives, the message is clear—defending nature remains an enduring struggle.

Through this narrative progression, it becomes clear that the central theme of the novel is civil conflict as a form resistance to infrastructure. This resistance is not portrayed as random rebellion, but as a psychologically grounded, morally justified, and discursively constructed response to ecological and ideological threats.

Understanding how civil conflict is constructed in The Monkey Wrench Gang requires examining the underlying pressures that turn personal dissatisfaction into organized resistance. The novel builds this conflict through ongoing tensions rooted in environmental, political, and spatial domination, expressed through three interrelated factors that shape the characters' defiance. It begins with the large-scale infrastructure development in the American Southwest—particularly the construction of massive dams and the use of heavy machinery that drastically alter natural landscapes. In response to these intrusions, the main characters—Hayduke, Doc, Bonnie, and Seldom Seen—gradually realize the deep ecological damage and the systemic neglect of both nature and local communities.

Zulkifli (2017) states that Ideally, resistance to such developments would begin with negotiation, legal efforts, or public protest. However, the novel presents a different reality. The characters do not attempt petitions, lawsuits, or formal appeals because they already understand that the system is fundamentally unresponsive and aligned with industrial interests. This disillusionment leads them to bypass peaceful methods entirely and move straight to direct sabotage—most notably illustrated when Hayduke burns a bulldozer, symbolizing their break from conventional activism and their readiness to confront power head-on.

The government's repressive response, involving surveillance, pursuit, and criminal charges, further emphasizes the state's alignment with corporate agendas and its intolerance of dissent. Through this narrative progression, it becomes clear that the central theme of the novel is civil conflict as a form of resistance to infrastructure.

The exploitation on natural resources stands as one of the central drivers behind the resistance movement against infrastructure development in The Monkey Wrench Gang. The novel vividly portrays how large-scale industrial projects—such as dams, highways, and railway systems—are imposed upon the landscape with little to no regard for their devastating ecological consequences or the displacement of local communities. Nature is no longer treated as a living system but is commodified, reduced to a resource to be extracted, sold, and reshaped for profit. Pristine desert ecosystems, once symbols of spiritual and ecological balance, are transformed into arenas of environmental degradation under the pretense of progress.

Within this framework, development is framed not as neutral advancement, but as a hegemonic apparatus that imposes the values of capitalist growth while suppressing alternative ways of relating to land, such as indigenous knowledge systems or ecocentric worldviews. This narrative aligns with the concept of ecological distribution conflicts, as theorized by Joan Martínez-Alier and further developed through the Environmental Justice Atlas (EJAtlas) project (Martínez-Alier et al., 2021), which documents thousands of cases worldwide where environmental burdens—such as pollution, land grabbing, and resource extraction—are disproportionately borne by indigenous peoples, rural communities, and marginalized social groups. These conflicts expose how infrastructural expansion often externalizes environmental costs onto those with the least power to resist or participate in decision-making processes .

The novel's resistance thus emerges not merely as an act of sabotage but as a moral and political response to systemic dispossession. Land appropriation, forced displacement, and the silencing of local voices in the name of progress reflect the structural violence embedded in infrastructure-driven modernization.

This pattern is not isolated to the American Southwest. In the Indonesian context, Asran Jalal and Sahruddin Lubis (2025) argue that the post-authoritarian transition has witnessed a surge in violent land and resource conflicts. These are fueled by ecological scarcity, weak regulatory institutions, and persistent elite capture, all of which silence community participation and intensify environmental injustice. Their findings underscore how democratization without environmental accountability risks reproducing the same patterns of exclusion and resistance observed in Abbey's narrative . Magnus Öberg (2008) argues that civil conflicts are often triggered by inequalities in the distribution and control of natural resources. When political elites and corporations monopolize access to land, water, minerals and energy without fair participatory mechanisms, affected groups have the potential to develop into resistance actors. Öberg also explained that exclusive and exploitative resource management encourages vertical conflict between the state and the people, especially if development policies ignore the principles of sustainability and distribution justice . Supporting this, Sufriadi et al. (2024) document cases in Bengkulu Province where violent clashes erupted when corporate actors

attempted to appropriate customary land rights without proper consent, highlighting how state-corporate alliances can lead to conflict escalation. The monopolization of natural resources thus operates not merely as an economic injustice but as a profound form of political disenfranchisement .

This condition is reflected in the narrative structure of The Monkey Wrench Gang, where the characters come from social backgrounds that are outside the formal power system. They are individuals who have an emotional and historical attachment to nature, but have no space to voice their interests in the development process. In terms of political economy, their position represents a class marginalized by the alliance between the state and capital. As such, their acts of sabotage cannot be read simply as a form of vandalism, but rather as a political expression of powerlessness in the face of a structurally repressive system. Alfirdaus et al. (2023) describe how mining and cement factories in rural Central Java triggered intra-community conflict when development planning bypassed local participation, thereby fracturing social cohesion and intensifying resistance . This insight contextualizes Abbey's characters' reliance on direct action as a response to the failure of legitimate institutional mechanisms.

The most obvious analogy can be found in the Naxalite movement in India, which was also born out of inequality in access to land and natural resources. The movement emerged in response to mining and infrastructure development projects that displaced indigenous communities from their lands. As Kurniawan, Erowati and Astuti (2024) explain, the absence of communities in development planning processes leads to widespread resistance, especially when legal and administrative demands do not result in change. In this context, resistance is not only a reaction, but also an alternative form of representation for spatial justice and sustainability

Meanwhile, a case study of the conflict in Darfur, Sudan, shows a more extreme form of resource exploitation. According to Zulkarnain (2023), land grabbing by state-backed armed militias not only harms local communities economically, but also leads to the erasure of cultural and geographical identities. When land becomes the object of armed conflict, the existence of the people who live on it is also threatened . Just like in the novel, space is no longer neutral, but becomes an arena for power struggles between the state and society. This shows that the characters' struggle is not merely to preserve land in a material sense, but to defend the cultural and existential significance that the land embodies.

In the context of The Monkey Wrench Gang, resource exploitation is seen as not just an environmental issue, but also an ideological and existential issue. Its figures reject the development model that separates humans from nature, and instead emphasize that nature has an intrinsic value that cannot be calculated economically. In this paradigm, resistance to infrastructure development becomes a form of resistance to the single narrative of progress, and becomes a space for articulation of alternative values that are more humanistic and ecological. Abbey's novel, therefore, offers a powerful literary articulation of these alternative ecological values, challenging readers to reconsider the costs and consequences of unbridled infrastructural expansion.

This articulation of ecological resistance is inseparable from the political conditions that enable or suppress such resistance. While environmental degradation provides the material grounds for dissent, the persistence and escalation of resistance are often shaped by the political atmosphere in which opposition occurs. Abbey's depiction of sabotage and defiance thus cannot be fully understood without considering the broader repressive structures that silence or delegitimize environmental voices. This leads to the second key factor behind the resistance movement: political repression.

Political repression is one of the main factors that not only provokes but also sustains and expands resistance movements, especially in contexts where development projects are exploitative and ecologically damaging. In such contexts, repression does not merely take the form of overt violence or criminalization—it also involves the delegitimization of dissent and the monopolization of public discourse by state and corporate actors.

In The Monkey Wrench Gang, Edward Abbey portrays a political and economic system in which the state is not a neutral arbiter of the public good, but an active collaborator with corporate interests. Infrastructure development, ostensibly pursued in the name of progress and national interest, becomes a vehicle for ecological destruction and dispossession. The state,

rather than mediating competing interests, becomes an enforcer of capitalist expansion, systematically repressing those who dare to challenge its legitimacy or question its developmental agenda.

The novel's protagonists occupy a structurally marginalized and politically silenced position. They are disillusioned not just by the ecological destruction they witness, but also by the institutional barriers that prevent meaningful democratic engagement. Legal and political avenues for voicing dissent are rendered ineffective, co-opted, or outright closed—making direct action appear as the only remaining means of resistance. This is emblematic of a broader dynamic in which the state, under the guise of law and order, redefines dissent as deviance and casts resistance as criminality.

By monopolizing the definition of legality and morality, the state delegitimizes alternative political imaginaries and suppresses any critique that challenges the status quo. In such an environment, resistance movements often emerge not in spite of repression, but because of it—drawing strength from shared grievances, the moral urgency of their cause, and the lack of institutional recourse. The repression they face ironically fosters greater solidarity and radicalization, as participants begin to see their struggle not just as environmental defense, but as a broader fight against systemic injustice.

Magnus Öberg (2008) explains that political repression by the state is one of the main triggers for the escalation of civil conflict. In many cases, repressive measures such as banning protests, criminalizing activists, tight surveillance of the opposition, and state violence against civilians actually broaden the support base for resistance groups . The state's closure of democratic space creates conditions in which formerly moderate groups are forced to adopt radical strategies. In this framework, violence is no longer an ideological choice, but a structural consequence of a system that rejects plurality.

The study of Tilis, Atanus, and Pala (2024) reinforces this argument by showing that resistance to development often grows stronger when the state uses repression in response to community aspiration. The harder the state represses, the more likely it is that more systematic and organized resistance will emerge . This shows that the state is not only an actor regulating development, but also part of the conflict when it does not provide equal space for participation and dialogue.

This pattern is not limited to international contexts. Hasbi Aswar and Gustrieni Putri (2022), in their analysis of state repression against the HTI and FPI movements in Indonesia, show that when the government responds to ideological dissent with disbandment, criminalization, and stigmatization, the result is not the dissolution of the movement, but rather the emergence of new, more resilient resistance strategies . The repression narrows legal and political space, pushing affected groups to seek alternative, often informal, avenues of contestation. A similar mechanism is observable in The Monkey Wrench Gang, where the state's repressive stance transforms environmental activism into acts of direct sabotage.

Furthermore, Hikmawan, Indriyany, and Hamid (2021), in their study of the water conflict in Pandeglang, demonstrate that corporate-state alliances frequently marginalize local communities. When the government sides with corporate interests and restricts public participation, resistance inevitably emerges from grassroots actors . In The Monkey Wrench Gang, this dynamic is mirrored in the alliance between state authorities and corporate developers, which leaves no legitimate forum for environmental concerns to be addressed, compelling the protagonists to resort to subversive actions.

Nuraini Siregar (2022) adds that the ongoing democratic backsliding in Indonesia has resulted in increased repression and a shrinking civic space. Under such conditions, public dissent is frequently criminalized, which undermines trust in formal political channels and drives citizens toward non-institutional forms of resistance . This analysis deepens the understanding of the novel's depiction of political repression: the characters do not act out of sheer anti-authoritarianism, but rather in response to a political system that delegitimizes their environmental advocacy.

This phenomenon can be seen clearly in the political conflict in Spain with the emergence of the separatist group ETA. The suppression of Basque identity and the prohibition of local language and culture by the Franco regime triggered the birth of an armed movement that targeted state infrastructure. Although ETA is often perceived as an extremist group, the roots of

their resistance stem from systemic repression that closed all democratic channels. This shows that resistance is not always an expression of radical ideology, but is often the result of prolonged political marginalization.

In the context of The Monkey Wrench Gang, the state is portrayed not as neutral, but as a tool of domination that protects corporate interests in the name of progress. When the state fails to perform its function as a public protector, the legitimacy of power is questioned. The characters operate outside the formal legal framework not because they hate the law, but because the legal system does not provide space for environmental protection. Their resistance reflects Öberg's logic of conflict, in which prolonged repression creates new actors who are ready to fight back, even in ways that fall outside the formal boundaries of legality. The insights from contemporary studies (Aswar & Putri, 2022; Hikmawan et al., 2023; Siregar, 2021) further validate this study by illustrating how repression and the closure of democratic space remain potent drivers of resistance across different contexts.

While political repression provides an external catalyst for resistance, it is the internal ethical struggle that defines the personal depth and complexity of such actions. In Abbey's narrative, the act of resistance is not merely a strategic response to injustice, but also a profound moral decision shaped by conflicting values, loyalties, and perceptions of justice.

One of the most complex aspects of resistance movements is the moral dilemmas that accompany them. In the context of The Monkey Wrench Gang, resistance to infrastructure development is not only in the form of technical or strategic actions, but also involves an inner battle between the characters regarding ethical decisions in the face of an unjust system. When state and corporate power are deemed to have failed to protect nature and closed the space for public participation, the characters are positioned in a condition that requires them to take action, even if the action is contrary to formal law. Under these conditions, sabotage of property and infrastructure is not seen as a criminal act, but as a response to a system that offers no legitimate moral alternatives.

In civil conflict studies, such moral dilemmas often arise when resistance groups operate in the gray area between legality and legitimacy. Magnus Öberg (2008) asserts that when the state ignores substantive justice and only enforces the law in a formalistic manner, civil groups will begin to formulate their own moral standards, which may conflict with state laws . Under these conditions, actions that are legally considered criminal can be seen as morally legitimate by the perpetrators and their supporting communities.

Moral dilemmas in resistance are also highly contextualized, depending on the structure of repression and the political opportunities available. In the case of the Naxalite movement in India, as explained by Nursanti and Pudjibudojo (2021), the transformation from peaceful struggle to armed resistance was not solely caused by radical ideology, but by disappointment with a system that did not respond to the demands of indigenous peoples. Resistance becomes a form of "moral defense" when state law no longer provides protection to economically and culturally marginalized citizens .

Supporting this, the study by Sabila Alisa Nurlaili & Wisnu Bagus Prayoga (2023) on the imprisonment of environmental activists in Karimunjawa highlights the moral conflict faced by activists who challenge illegal corporate practices. Their activism, though criminalized by the state, is rooted in a legitimate ethical struggle against environmental injustice and exclusion from public participation . This case exemplifies how formal law can be weaponized to silence dissent, forcing activists into a moral quandary where resistance is the only viable option despite legal repercussions.

Similarly, Abdul Rasyid Fakhrun Gani et al. (2021) emphasize the ethical dilemmas in environmental education and research, where practitioners must navigate between scientific rigor and moral responsibility. This dilemma mirrors the internal conflicts within resistance movements where decisions to take radical action stem from a perceived failure of conventional institutions to uphold justice and sustainability . These insights reinforce the understanding that resistance movements are not only political but profoundly ethical endeavors rooted in contextual moral imperatives.

In the Sudanese context, moral dilemmas also arise when previously passive civil society begins to consider involvement in armed movements after experiencing prolonged repression. The Sudanese Alliance for Rights (2025) report notes that following the outbreak of armed

conflict in 2023, the state's practice of violence against civilians—such as arbitrary detention, torture, and military tribunals—encouraged the emergence of armed solidarity from previously non-militant civilian groups . This shows that resistance often develops not because of radical initial intentions, but because of structural pressures that leave no room for peaceful responses.

In The Monkey Wrench Gang, the moral dilemma is illustrated through the different views within the group on how to act. Although they share the same vision of protecting nature, they differ in interpreting the boundaries of ethically acceptable actions. This reflects that in every resistance movement, there is an internal negotiation process between values, strategies, and risks. Within the framework of civil conflict theory, this moral dilemma enriches the understanding that resistance is not only a political action, but also a space of intense ethical struggle.

Therefore, while the moral dilemma is not the initial cause of resistance, it plays a significant role in shaping the trajectory and intensity of the movement. It emerges as a consequence of structural injustice and the absence of ethical alternatives within the legal framework. In this sense, moral dilemmas become part of the internal justification process that legitimizes resistance, transforming it from a mere act of protest into a deeply personal and existential struggle.

The Monkey Wrench Gang constructs civil conflict through environmental degradation, political repression, and moral tension—reflecting real-world resistance patterns. In various geopolitical contexts, marginalized communities facing ecological exploitation and systemic exclusion respond through organized defiance. These parallels place the novel within a broader discourse on how power, space, and justice are contested, offering insight into how civil conflict functions both narratively and politically.

One kind of resistance to infrastructure development that is similar to the thematic core of The Monkey Wrench Gang is the Naxalite movement in India. Originating in 1967 in the village of Naxalbari, the movement began when marginalized farmers and indigenous communities rebelled against exploitative land systems and the dominance of large corporations. This armed resistance emerged not from ideological extremism, but from the deep frustration of communities whose land was seized without consent and whose pleas for justice were ignored. Their targets included state infrastructure—railroads, mining operations, and energy facilities—that symbolized capitalist control and ecological destruction.

This political and spatial dynamic resonates throughout Abbey's novel, which opens with a vivid portrayal of vast infrastructure projects transforming the landscape of the American Southwest. Rather than representing progress, these developments are seen by the main characters as harbingers of ecological collapse and cultural erasure.

> **"Back to work," he growled, rousing her. "We got three bridges, a railroad, a strip mine, a power plant, two dams, a nuclear reactor, one computer data center, six highway projects and a BLM scenic overlook to take care of this week." (chapter 20, page 142)**

This ironic enumeration of their 'targets' reflects the novel's setting: a region under siege from the machinery of industrial expansion. The gang's resistance is rooted in their growing awareness of the irreversible damage inflicted upon the land. They become disillusioned with a legal and political system that defends corporate interests rather than natural or communal well-being. As Hayduke bitterly notes, all attempts at reform have already failed:

> **"They tried everything else," Hayduke grumbled. "They tried lawsuits, big fucking propaganda campaigns, politics." (chapter 12, page 97)**

This rejection of legal avenues propels them toward direct action. Just like the Naxalites, who perceived state infrastructure as an extension of oppression, the gang begins dismantling the physical symbols of destruction—railways, machinery, and pipelines. Their sabotage is not wanton destruction but a strategic, symbolic effort to resist domination. In one daring act, they prepare explosives to derail a coal train supplying a major power plant:

> **"We blast the tracks right in front of the locomotive and the whole works goes ass over tincups into the canyon, bridge or no bridge." (chapter 14, page 111)**

The group's actions draw the attention of the state, which responds not with dialogue but criminal prosecution. Their arrest and trial underscore how environmental resistance is rebranded as terrorism or conspiracy:

> **"Abbzug, Sarvis and Smith were arraigned... on the following charges: assault with a deadly weapon, arson, aggravated arson, and conspiracy, a felony."(epilogue, page 233)**

Despite these criminal charges, the narrative insists that their actions arise from a moral imperative. The gang is not portrayed as extremists but as individuals grappling with the ethical weight of defending nature. Hayduke's uncompromising militancy often clashes with Doc Sarvis's more restrained stance, echoing the tensions within real-world movements like the Naxalites between political reformists and radical insurgents.

Both The Monkey Wrench Gang and the Naxalite movement reveal that when systems fail to protect land, life, and justice, resistance becomes necessary. Civil conflict—whether in India or Utah—stems from systemic exclusion, environmental harm, and suppressed dissent. This pattern is global; from the U.S. to India to Franco-era Spain, resistance arises when states prioritize control and profit over community rights and identity.

The political conflict between the Spanish government and the separatist group ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna) in the Basque region is a form of resistance to state domination that curbs local identity. ETA was born out of dissatisfaction with the Franco regime's repression that banned the Basque language and culture, and restricted the political rights of the people in the region. In its development, ETA employed strategies of armed struggle and sabotage against state infrastructure, including transportation networks, government offices, and symbols of central power. Despite the spirit of liberation, the movement experienced internal divisions between those who pushed for a peaceful path through the political process and those who chose to maintain violence as a form of resistance. In Abbey's novel, the story unfolds against a backdrop of massive infrastructure projects imposed upon the American Southwest, depicted not as progress but as ecological and cultural devastation:

> **"All this fantastic effort — giant machines, road networks, strip mines, conveyor belt, pipelines, slurry lines, loading towers, railway and electric train, hundred-million-dollar coal-burning power plant, and the destruction of Indian homes and Indian grazing lands — for what?" (chapter 12, page 100)**

Like ETA's response to Madrid's development of Basque territory, the gang's resistance begins with a growing awareness of what is being lost and who benefits from the destruction. The characters become disillusioned by institutions that enable this environmental degradation.

> **"He knew how the system worked. After all, he was a veteran of Vietnam." (chapter 6, page 45)**

Similar to ETA members who rejected the Francoist legal order, Hayduke sees no value in using corrupted political channels. He and the gang refuse to pursue protest or reform, believing those strategies have already failed:

> **"They tried everything else," Hayduke grumbled. "They tried lawsuits, big fucking propaganda campaigns, politics." chapter 12 page 97**

This total rejection of institutional pathways leads to direct sabotage. Just as ETA targeted railways and power grids to disrupt Spanish authority, the gang attacks machines that represent industrial violence:

> **"They worked on the patient, sifting handfuls of fine Triassic sand into the crankcase, cutting up the wiring, the fuel lines, the hydraulic hoses. They hammered flat all the tubing and stripped the insulation from the wiring. Hayduke took the spanner from his hip pocket and let out the oil. The great machine began to bleed." chapter 6 page 54**

Yet, as with ETA, internal conflict arises over how far they are willing to go. One pivotal exchange reveals the tension between Hayduke's militancy and Doc Sarvis's ethical boundaries:

> **"We gotta defend our fucking selves."**
>
> **"No guns." Doc could be stubborn.**
>
> **"Them fuckers'll be shooting at us!"**
>
> **"No bloodshed." The doctor stood fast. (Chapter 6, Page 44)**

This reflects the ideological tensions within ETA, where some members moved toward peaceful negotiation while others remained committed to armed resistance. Ultimately, both the gang and ETA face state repression. Law enforcement in the novel responds not with dialogue, but with criminal prosecution:

> **"Abbzug, Sarvis and Smith were arraigned in Federal District Court on the following charges: assault with a deadly weapon, aggravated assault, arson, aggravated arson, and conspiracy." (epilogue, page 233)**

Resistance is often criminalized when it challenges state authority, emerging not from a desire for violence but from the lack of political space. When nonviolent protest is disregarded, resistance acquires moral complexity, obscuring the distinction between justice and crime. As ETA struggled for identity inside an industrialized state, analogous processes emerge in postcolonial contexts such as Darfur, where persecution and restricted land access incite rebellion motivated by survival rather than nationality.

The civil conflict in Darfur, Sudan, illustrates how political exclusion, ethnic tension, and resource inequality can lead to violent resistance. Non-Arab residents, marginalized by the Khartoum government, were denied for fair access to land and services, prompting rebel groups like the SLA and JEM to demand autonomy and justice. The government's brutal response, via militias like the Janjaweed, turned land into a battleground for survival. This mirrors The Monkey Wrench Gang, where resistance arises not through war but sabotage opposing ecological domination and industrial expansion in the American Southwest. Both cases reflect how contested space becomes central to struggles Early in the novel, The novel captures this transformation through industrial imagery:

> **"All this fantastic effort—giant machines, road networks, strip mines, conveyor belt, pipelines… for what? To light the lamps of Phoenix suburbs not yet built… to power aluminum plants… to keep alive that phosphorescent putrefying glory called Down Town, Night Time, Wonderville, U.S.A."**

Rather than militias, the gang faces bulldozers and pipelines. Institutions that should protect the environment instead enable its destruction. Hayduke's skepticism, shaped by his past, reflects this betrayal:

> **"After all, he was a veteran of Vietnam. He knew how the system worked."**

Even Doc Sarvis, a moderate, opposes official channels as an act of symbolism of protest:

> **"Still calm and reasonable, he walked to the steel-framed desk… and punched out the window glass. All of it. Thoroughly. The students watched in quiet approval. Doc brushed his hands. 'We'll skip roll call today,' he said." (chapter 6, page 45)**

Their sabotage—like disabling a Caterpillar D-9A—is strategic, not senseless:

> **"They crawled all over a Caterpillar D-9A… Sand in the oil intake… poured four quarts of good high-energy Karo into the diesel fuel… We could knock a pin out of each tread. Then when the thing moved it would run right off its own fucking tracks." (chapter 6, page 52)**

Just as the Sudanese state criminalized rebels, Abbey's characters are charged and prosecuted:

> **"Abbzug, Sarvis and Smith were arraigned… assault with a deadly weapon… aggravated arson… conspiracy… Later, in Federal District Court… unlawful transportation and use of explosives, and escape from official custody." (epilogue, page 223)**

In both realities, resistance is framed not as a pursuit of justice but as a threat. The language of terrorism and sabotage is used to silence desperation and survival. Whether in Sudan or Utah, the fight over land becomes a fight over who controls space—and who gets erased.

Concerning the resistance construction, it is presented that the gang comes directly into radical movements due to the fact that the gang knows that peaceful protest such as petitions, lawsuit are useless.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how Edward Abbey's The Monkey Wrench Gang presents resistance to infrastructure through Kristeva's suprasegmental approach is applied alongside Renkema's psycholinguistic model, which adopts Mandler and Johnson's story grammar to depict how characters evolve from passive observers to active resisters. These methods highlight the novel's sustained critique of environmental exploitation and institutional power.

The finding reveals that the central theme of the novel is civil conflict as a form of resistance to infrastructure.

The second research aim reveals civil conflict as rooted in resource exploitation and political repression, with moral dilemmas arising from these conditions. The characters' psychological conflicts embody moral dilemmas with sabotage and justice. The novel ultimately depicts resistance as a multifaceted reaction to systematic injustice, presenting infrastructure not as advancement, but as a disputed domain. Literature serves as a path for environmental ethics and socio-political critique.

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