

California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

2001

A rhetorical study of Edward Abbey's picaresque novel The fool's progress

Kent Murray Rogers

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rogers, Kent Murray, "A rhetorical study of Edward Abbey's picaresque novel The fool's progress" (2001).

Theses Digitization Project. 2079.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/2079>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@csusb.edu.

A RHETORICAL STUDY OF EDWARD ABBEY'S
PICARESQUE NOVEL THE FOOL'S PROGRESS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Kent Murray Rogers

June 2001

A RHETORICAL STUDY OF EDWARD ABBEY'S
PICARESQUE NOVEL THE FOOL'S PROGRESS

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino


by
Kent Murray Rogers

June 2001

Approved by:


Elinore Partridge, Chair, English

5/23/01
Date


Clark Mayo


Peter Schroeder

ABSTRACT

The rhetoric of Edward Paul Abbey has long created controversy. Many readers have embraced his works while many others have reacted with dislike or even hostility. Some readers have expressed a mixture of reactions, often citing one book, essay or passage in a positive manner while excusing or completely ignoring another that is deemed offensive. Practically all of Abbey's works created some level of controversy; however, The Fool's Progress (1988), his last novel published during his lifetime, created an uproar that even eclipsed his earlier works.

In Plato's Phaedrus, Socrates poses the rhetorical question, "[m]ust not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words?" Abbey stated repeatedly throughout his lifetime that he wrote in an attempt to influence or at least create a reaction among his readers. However, in order for a writer to influence his or her readers to adopt or at least consider a conviction or philosophy, employing negative, insulting or even hateful rhetoric is often considered a detriment to a work's validity. As the rhetoric in The Fool's Progress is often negative, insulting and hateful,

the question becomes why Abbey would take such a rhetorical approach.

This thesis addresses this question of why Abbey employed such rhetoric and what resulting effects he hoped to achieve. Examining Abbey's rhetoric in terms of classical Western rhetorical traditions, the genre of the picaresque, and his own ideological stance can aid in understanding what his intentions are in this controversial work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee for their tireless work and insightful suggestions. I would also like to thank Dana Brookins, without whom this thesis would never have come about.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	v
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: THE CONTROVERSY	1
CHAPTER TWO: ROOTS, REASONS AND REASSESSMENT	8
CHAPTER THREE: FEET OF CLAY: ABBEY'S RHETORICAL DEVELOPMENT	35
CHAPTER FOUR: A "BROKEN DOWN, BICAMERAL MIND": AMBIVALENCE AND DUALISM IN <u>THE FOOL'S</u> <u>PROGRESS</u> , AN EXPLORATION OF RHETORICAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DISORIENTATION	84
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	126
WORKS CITED	140

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE CONTROVERSY

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue.

—M. M. Bakhtin

I write in a deliberately outrageous or provocative manner because I like to startle people. I hope to wake up people. I have no desire to simply soothe or please. I would rather risk making people angry than putting them to sleep.

—Edward Abbey

Rarely did Edward Paul Abbey's writings fail to create controversy. Called everything from "the Thoreau of the

American West" (qtd. in Bishop 144) to "a furious, overeducated hillbilly" (Marston 61), Abbey, as a figurehead for groups concerned with issues including environmental destruction and the loss of personal freedoms, and his written works were both fervently admired and vehemently despised—and sometimes both reactions were realized within the same individual or group. Indeed, critic Ed Marston, writing a review of The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel for The National Review both attacked and praised Abbey's rhetorics and beliefs, not only calling him a "furious, overeducated hillbilly," but also stating that his writing "lacks magic"; yet in the same review, Marston went on to state that the novel is "admirably [. . .] well-plotted" and that the protagonist "lives [and] breath[es] for the reader" (61-62). In another review, The Library Journal referred to the book as "crude," only to conclude that it "is a powerful, often hauntingly beautiful novel recommended for most libraries" (Henderson 105). The Chicago Tribune mixed numerous responses into one sentence, deeming the work "a profane, wildly funny, brash, overbearing, exquisite tour de force," concluding that "few passages [are] printable in a newspaper" (Luft 3). Other

reviews were often more singularly polarized. The New York Times Book Review, for example, called The Fool's Progress "[v]ery funny and sometimes beautiful," (Coale 22) while Time magazine referred to Abbey as "wretched" and his book the "Sick-Dog Blues" (Skow 98).

Earlier works also created controversy. The Monkey Wrench Gang (1975), for example, was branded "eco-pornography" by one Tucson newspaper, while another stated that the work was powerful enough to "make the Board of Directors of Standard Oil start tithing to the Sierra Club" (Bishop 126-27). Desert Solitaire, a 1968 collection of personal essays by Abbey was hailed by The New York Times as "a passionately felt, deeply poetic book" (qtd. in Bishop 147) while The Flagstaff News derided Abbey by stating that "his credibility is rimless[,] [. . .] [h]is reservoir of misinformation inexhaustible" (qtd. in Confessions of a Barbarian 216).

In a 1977 interview, Abbey spoke with delight about various responses to an article he wrote about strip mining that was published in Playboy: "I was very flattered to get hate letters from Senator Hanson of Wyoming and from Senator Moss of Utah, from the president of the American

Coal Association and an official of the EPA . . . All those fellows wrote in condemning the article, which was quite delightful to me, of course" (Hepworth 53-54). Abbey's works not only created controversy, but, more importantly, Abbey appeared to love and even crave the furor; he continually dangled his rhetorical bait, and the intended prey compliantly snatched the lures and struggled.

The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel (1988), however, trod new controversial--and questionable--ground. Whereas Abbey's previous works had often created division among readers through his discussions regarding personal freedoms and environmental responsibilities, this new book not only focused more closely on the individual and collective human condition but, more importantly, often couched the discussion in extremely offensive and sometimes bigoted rhetoric. The book, quite simply, reads at points as a racist, misogynistic, and/or generally misanthropic diatribe; almost everyone, at one point or another, seems a target. Even many of Abbey's friends and most ardent admirers were shocked; in fact many of them, because of their backgrounds or beliefs, appeared to be objects of Abbey's apparent wrath. Indeed, Abbey even targeted

himself. He not only resorted to calling his self-admittedly autobiographical protagonist such names as "hillbilly white trash" (256), but also depicted the character as an offensive, pathetic, and fatefully self-absorbed individual.

Name-calling, as a rhetorical device, is usually considered a fallacy, that is, an ad hominem argument that appeals to prejudice or emotion rather than reason or logic. Nonetheless, in The Fool's Progress, Abbey seems to have reveled in this practice. Many readers reacted understandably and dismissed the work. Others, however, despite being offended, saw the rhetoric as part of the protagonist's mental and verbal psyche, the novel therefore an exploration of a complex character whose philosophies fit no one single category or belief system. As Lisa Miller put it in the Arizona Republic, "[t]his is no ho-hum novel. Readers will cherish it or burn it, but they're not going to leave it out in the rain" (qtd. in Bishop 169); if anything, The Fool's Progress, depending on one's reaction, made it either even easier-or harder-to pigeonhole Abbey.

As Bakhtin reminds us, "[t]he living utterance [. . .] cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue" (276). Abbey knew his work would be read, discussed, evaluated and reacted to. What, then, was the reason for such obviously offensive rhetoric? Or was there any reason at all besides revealing a hitherto unknown and possibly abhorrent aspect of Abbey's psyche? Aristotle, in The Rhetoric, states, "speakers themselves are made trustworthy by three things [. . .] which make us believe. These are, intelligence, virtue and good-will" (150; bk. 2, ch. 1, sec. 5). Often, an author writes to influence; Abbey's works stand as clear examples of such intent. Furthermore, the act of writing, it will become evident, was not only extremely important to Edward Abbey but was also a craft and art to which he faithfully and ardently devoted much of his life; it was additionally one for which he clearly craved recognition as well as praise and respect. One wonders, then, why Abbey, who held a Master's of Arts Degree in Philosophy, would create a work seemingly designed to alienate even those readers who admired and even emulated him.

In order to explore the controversy surrounding The Fool's Progress, this thesis will address four primary considerations: why Abbey chose a specific genre (the picaresque) as medium for this novel and how such medium relates to his stated goals as a writer; how The Fool's Progress rhetorically relates to his other works; the rhetorical deployment within The Fool's Progress; how successful Abbey's approach is and how such success is defined.

Ultimately, the question comes down to one of intentions: why and to what intended end did Abbey employ his rhetoric? To what possibly greater goal did Abbey utilize the intentional fallacy of name-calling, or was such usage even intentional? In other words, was Abbey, an admitted—and proud—gadfly, trying in The Fool's Progress to convey philosophies and convictions in ways he'd never before broached in order to achieve a specific dialogic state and hence social consequence or was his work merely, as the title of his novel implies, the "honest" rhetorical progress of a fool?

CHAPTER TWO

ROOTS, REASONS AND REASSESSMENT

Ed [Abbey] was a great writer. He angers the effete, and he utterly seduces his readers into absorbing his pith as if we were amoebas. And, sometimes, he hurts us. I'm trying hard not to do backflips here just to defend my favorite writer.

-Luis Alberto Urrea

[Autobiographical,] The Fool's Progress is about a furious, overeducated hillbilly.

-Ed Marston

When, in the early 1980s, Edward Abbey informed his publisher that he was working on a new novel, he stated that it was to be a work in the picaresque genre, a genre which had developed and arguably reached its zenith some four hundred years earlier. Moreover, Abbey explained, the work was projected to break in terms of format, setting and scope from Abbey's best known and most popular works. Often recognized as a "regional" writer of the American

Southwest, Abbey had built his reputation (and his following) through works that commonly dealt with issues regarding the environment and personal freedoms. Best known among these many texts (Abbey published nineteen books during his lifetime; another six were published posthumously), are Desert Solitaire (1968) and The Monkey Wrench Gang (1975). Desert Solitaire is a loosely connected collection of essays stemming from Abbey's three seasonal stays as a park ranger in Utah's Arches National Monument. The Monkey Wrench Gang, on the other hand, is a fictional work detailing the exploits of four "eco-saboteurs" whose ultimate goal is the physical destruction of the Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado River. Abbey's many other works were mostly written in similar veins: either essays collected under one general theme, or fictional narratives in which the tale is recounted in a relatively linear, successive manner, each scene stemming and resulting from the previous one thus creating a unity of action. Why, then, would Abbey, then at the peak of his popularity (his popularity would continue to grow, especially in the years following his death), choose to

employ a format first developed some four centuries earlier and which he'd never before rhetorically explored?

The picaresque genre first appeared in Spain during the latter half of the sixteenth century, a time of political and cultural reassessment that stemmed from disillusionment both societal and personal. In 1554, a short, anonymous work entitled La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades (The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes, His Fortunes and Adversities) appeared and, though viewed by some with skepticism, disgust or even repulsion, quickly created a literary sensation.

Previously, popular literature in Spain (and much of Europe) fell into the "chivalric" genre: tales of knights-errant on glorious and generally fantastic quests in search of dragons, monsters, giants, wizards and enchanters with whom to do battle, usually in the name of a distant ladylove and the even greater honor of the Crown (Sedgwick 146). This genre largely reflected Spain's political and military might and ambition: after nearly seven centuries of Islamic rule, Spain, in the latter half of the fifteenth century, broke free of its Moorish rulers and proceeded to become a self-contained power, which then attempted to

exercise its military and religious might over its surrounding European neighbors (Merwin 12-13). However, by the middle of the sixteenth century, reality set in: the recent, gleeful optimism had given way to a cold, disconcerting pessimism in which poverty, hunger and discontent made up the everyday life of the common citizen. Discontent with the monarchy (which was intricately intertwined with the Catholic Church) swept through the citizenry (Duran 13-20).

Lazarillo, a work ostensibly written as a humble "letter to Your Excellency," proposed to tell the "factual" life and resultant escapades of a common person struggling through then-Spanish life. (As the true author of Lazarillo is, to this day, still unknown, some argue that the work may be more fact than fiction.) Though presented as a well-meaning missive, Lazarillo instead recounts, with sly black humor, what amounts to a life of abuse, cruelty and want in which the protagonist (or pícaro) ultimately learns, through a series of loosely related adventures, how to scheme and manipulate others (including government and church officials) so as not to be abused and manipulated himself and therefore gain some level of financial comfort

and respectability. In other words, Lazarillo, the work's protagonist, by presenting himself as little more than a humble fool to the crown, "unwittingly" demonstrates the hypocrisy and squalor of his world, one peopled by only the lowest and most dishonest, regardless of their recognized identity or social status. Indeed, the term *picaro*, at the heart of the picaresque genre, is defined in the early Spanish dictionary Tesoro de la lengua castellana (1st ed., 1611) as "a person of the lowest class, ragged and dirty, who is employed in low work" (qtd. in Haan 2). The Diccionario de la Academia Espanola (Vol. V, 1737) adds "astute; he who by skill and dissimulation attains what he desires" (qtd. in Haan 2). Lazarillo thus depicts the once-mighty Spain as having become little more than a collective pack of schemers, beggars and thieves, forced to such posts by corruption and necessity. Indeed, this was reassessment on both the highest-and severest-societal and literary level.

Nonetheless, the *picaro* is commonly portrayed as a very likable, even agreeable individual, despite whatever roguery or deceit he or she may engage in. In fact, a key point of the picaresque genre is that the *picaro* must

engage in such behavior, if for no other reason than the simple dictation of fate: the picaro is merely doing what she or he needs in order to survive a hostile, unfair world otherwise beyond the protagonist's control (Alter 6-7). Hence, the reader of a picaresque work not only feels sympathetic towards what otherwise would be a disagreeable, even loathsome character, but even to cheer the character on, so to speak: to enjoy traveling with and thus engage in the picaro's sordid schemes and (often arguably trite or childish) acts of revenge.

In a personal journal entry (Abbey's journals, which covered most of his adult life from the age of nineteen to his death at age sixty-one, were posthumously published under the collective title Confessions of a Barbarian) dated November 19, 1986, Abbey wrote:

What kind of book is The Fool's Progress?

Well . . . it's an Edward Abbey kind of book.

(Goddamn it.) It's about a fool. It's funny, harsh, sardonic, sentimental. It's picaro. It's a semi-autobiography. It's—a six hundred-page shaggy dog story. It's a farce with funeral. It's the story of a man's life from boyhood into

middle age-fifty years [. . .] Lightcap [the protagonist] is an arrogant, swaggering, macho, obnoxious and eccentric character—but he learns some humility in the end. Good for him.

(329-330).

Almost line-for-line, at points word-for-word, this entry lists many of the elements key to the picaresque genre. The most obvious reference is, quite simply, the word "picaro." (It is interesting to note, however, that Abbey is here referring to the work itself, rather than merely the protagonist, as picaro.) Other almost as obvious references include the reference to autobiography—though not all picaresque works are autobiographical, most, by design are, if not autobiographical, at least biographical in that they trace the day-to-day life of an individual. That Abbey lists The Fool's Progress as autobiographical merely cements his work closer to the genre, especially the earliest works including Lazarillo and the second picaresque work published, Mateo Alemán's Guzmán de Alfarache (1599). Exploring this concept further, Abbey goes on to reference The Fool's Progress as being "the story of a man's life from boyhood into middle-age"—i.e. an

entire life, up to the point in time of the writing of the work. Again, this approach is a primary aspect of the picaresque, especially as evinced in the first works.

Another important picaresque trait Abbey lists is the protagonist's personal qualities which he defines as being "arrogant, swaggering, macho, obnoxious and eccentric." A picaro, being on the fringe of seeming acceptability, usually displays at least one, if not several, of these traits. Lazaro, for example, is referred to as "stupid," "childish," and a "thief" (among other epithets) by those around him, especially his masters. The protagonist of Don Quixote, as another example, is furthermore viewed as being wildly eccentric, even mad. His adopted demeanor (however pathetic) of nobleman also includes an attempt at being "macho" (masculine, strong) and even at times arrogant in his pursuit of chivalric escapades as a knight-errant.

(Another interesting parallel of The Fool's Progress to Don Quixote is that, as Don Quixote is mounted on the tired and worn-out steed Rosinante and accompanied by his faithful but always suffering squire Sancho Panza, Lightcap travels in an old, dilapidated and collapsing truck, accompanied by his faithful but dying dog, Solstice. Indeed, on page 102

of The Fool's Progress, Lightcap even refers to the truck as "my Rosinante.") Henry Holyoak Lightcap, the protagonist of The Fool's Progress is not only portrayed as possessing attributes common to the picaresque, but even called as much or worse by other characters in the book, including "crazy" (336), "outrageous" (331), "an idiot" (71), and a "fool" (509), to cite but a few examples.

One paramount characteristic of the picaresque which is not mentioned in the above passage from Abbey's journal, however, is in the over-all structure of Abbey's novel: The Fool's Progress typically relates a series of unrelated adventures, united only by the fact that the protagonist, Lightcap, takes part in all of them. In fact, Abbey signals the reader of the plan early on: in a letter to his brother (whose residence is his ultimate physical goal), Lightcap writes that he will be there in "a week or two because I'm visiting some friends on the way" (68). Here the groundwork is laid for a series of escapades and adventures. Indeed, Lightcap experiences many encounters (for better or worse) as he makes his way across the United States from Tucson, Arizona to the mythical "Stump Creek, West Virginia" (a settlement in the Appalachian Mountains

similar to Abbey's own boyhood haunts in Pennsylvania--again, autobiography becomes apparent). Furthermore, while the characters who people Lightcap's travels are occasionally referred to at numerous scattered points throughout the book, each character or group of characters typically exists within a specific, delineated period of time and action usually relegated to a certain chapter or chapters. Moreover, regardless of where or how Lightcap encounters other people in his wanderings, most of these characters resemble or are typical of characters commonly found within a picaresque work, as discussed below.

While picaresque novels often make reference to people of stature within government or other spheres of power (especially in order to deride such figures), the picaro and his day-to-day world is largely made up of everyday, common people. Alberto del Monte, in Itinerario del romanzo picaresco spagnolo, argues that one of sixteenth century Spain's primary internal political problems was that it never fully developed a middle class--the common person was not far removed from the rogue or thief, hence the ready identification of citizens with the picaro (54). In the twentieth century United States (The Fool's Progress

is set ca. 1980), however, the middle class comprised the majority of the citizenry, hence fulfilling the same social function as sixteenth century Spain's lower class. Of course an accurate definition of just what comprises any class is clearly open to debate. Furthermore, what constitutes middle class in the United States during a period such as the depression of the 1930s is not necessarily the same as during the 1950s or 1980s. However, for sake of simplicity within this paper's argument, "middle class," as a generality, will merely be acknowledged as existing. In Henry Holyoak Lightcap's world, this middle class thus becomes a loose collection of the "common folk" of twentieth century United States, people who, largely through no fault of their own, struggle on a day-to-day basis just to eke out a living and, hence, a recognized place within an otherwise nearly incomprehensible and largely uncontrollable world.

Lightcap's world is peopled with everyone from farmers to truck drivers to waitresses to social workers, artists, businesspeople and college professors, all mere and largely unwitting parts of a much larger societal machine. In this, many clear parallels with other works of the

picaresque genre can be seen regarding class, social status and day-to-day life as well as the struggles such life presents. For example, early on, Lightcap encounters first the waitress then the owner of a small café named "Mom's," both of whom are portrayed as victims, beaten down by a system beyond their control: "[The waitress] looks tired, she looks downright weary, she's old enough to be my grandmother, anybody's grandmother, and she should be home in front of the Tee Vee right now, crocheting mittens for her great-granddaughter" (104). Lightcap then spies the owner, a man: "He too looks tired, melancholy, lonely [. . .] [h]uman, the poor devil, like the rest of us, too human for his own good" (105). During another episode as a social worker, Lightcap observes a fellow worker as representative of all workers and their fates:

Lanahan's smile faded away. His telephone rang. And as he revolved in his chair to answer the phone the pencil slipped from his ear and three overstuffed case records slid from the pile on his desk and fell to the floor, scattering a multitude of absolutely useless and irreplaceable documents

[. . .] [T]hough only about thirty years old, [Lanahan's] flesh wore already the pallor of smog and cement, his hair was half gone, his belly hung soft and paunchy in its sack of skin, and his bottom had broadened to conform to the seat of a wide padded office chair in which he would spend most of the remainder of his waking life. (266)

Lanahan, as representative of the common working class is, in Lightcap's view, a harried, prematurely spent individual, unrecognized as any entity other than a mere cog in society's machine; the designation of the records in his "overstuffed case" as "a multitude of absolutely useless and irreplaceable documents" underscores the redundancy, pointlessness and pathetic absurdity of his place in society as well as his uncontrollable fate.

Indeed, Abbey confirms the representational Lanahan's dismal fate in the closing passage: "his bottom had broadened to conform to the seat of the wide padded office chair in which he would spend most of the remainder of his waking life" (emphasis added)—the common person is thus portrayed as doomed, at best, to a lifetime of banality.

Later, in an encounter between Lightcap and several college professors, another parallel becomes clear in terms of the picaro's interaction with figures of authority, as well as the manipulation of power such figures attempt to wield within the picaresque world. As a young man attempting to advance to candidacy within a Master's program, Lightcap makes a fool of himself during an interview with his thesis committee, ultimately confirming his fate as a picaro:

And another question, Lightcap: Do you really want to be a professor of philosophy?

What? He looked up sharply from his clasped hands, which were resting on his lap in an attitude of thoughtful introspection. Sir?

You heard me, Lightcap. Do you really want to be a professor of philosophy?

I certainly want to be a philosopher, sir, and live la vie philosophique, goddamnit.

Answer my question.

Henry reflected. A fork in his road of life had most suddenly appeared dead ahead

[. . . .] Looking at his three Inquisitors

looking at him, he answered them collectively:

Not really, he said. (196)

This episode is a clear embodiment of the class/authority struggle common to the picaresque genre. Lightcap, though clever, clearly falls under the heading here of a ne'er-do-well in picaresque societal eyes; furthermore, his "Inquisitors" represent those who see themselves as being, by light of their deemed social position, somehow superior to the common person who Lightcap represents. In this, the situation of Lightcap and his professors obviously parallels that of Lazaro and his "masters"; though both Lightcap and Lazaro are beaten down, their "masters" are clearly little, if at all, in a better position than the protagonists. Indeed, all involved are merely players within the established (and inescapable) paradigm of the common people's class.

Lightcap's birth also parallels that of many picaros, especially that of Lazaro: Lazaro is born on the banks of a river beside his father's grist mill, thus denoting societal stature; Lightcap is born in an "antique gothic farmhouse, in the little bedroom on the second floor where

[he] was conceived [. . .] by the light of [a] kerosene lamp" (42), thereby also clueing the reader to the protagonist's lower social level at birth. Furthermore, in tracing Lightcap from birth to the point in his life when the narrative is written, The Fool's Progress also follows the common picaresque approach of biography.

As a person of the "common class," Lightcap, like all good picaros, then displays another trait highly important to his ilk: the protean ability to take on many different guises, manners, and professions. At various points in his life, Lightcap lives/works as a farmer, lumberjack, soldier, janitor, seasonal park ranger, rent collector/enforcer, social worker, and game preserve warden, to name but a few. The only occupation he returns to voluntarily is that of park ranger, and then only in six month assignments, and then only when he desires/needs the work. In fact, as a park ranger and hence government employee, Lightcap, like Lazaro (who eventually works as both a town crier and bailiff), enters into a world that promises some level of heightened status and manipulation of others, only to find that such a world is, at best, extremely limited and often hypocritical--again, just

another part of the common person's plight. Lightcap's protean abilities do not end merely with "legitimate" forms of employment, however; he also regularly delves into the underworld of the rogue and criminal, at times supporting himself through such enterprises as credit card fraud, drug smuggling and auto theft, at other times merely engaging in villainous behavior for the sheer enjoyment of it, including placing threatening telephone calls to government officials and vandalizing a vehicle owned by a person who Lightcap feels has unfairly exercised power over him.

Instability, yet another theme common to the picaro and his world, is also clearly evident in The Fools' Progress. Lightcap's world is socially, physically and mentally unstable; not only does every enterprise or relationship he forges his way into seemingly come crashing down around him due both to his own actions and those beyond his control, an example of the accident and fortune inherent to the picaro, his life itself is, throughout the work, unstable and disintegrating. Lightcap, we find, is dying from cancer.

Furthermore, this outward or physical instability reflects the internal mental instability within Lightcap,

which is most clearly manifested in his relationships with women. As part of the picaresque genre, the ability of the picaro to love another person beyond the level of lust is commonly nonexistent. Lightcap, with one questionable exception, clearly exhibits this. Throughout the work, Lightcap continuously lusts after practically every woman with whom he comes into contact. Married three times, involved in countless more affairs, Lightcap is unable to make any but superficial connections with women. ("Girls are like buses; miss one and another will come along in five minutes" [The Fool's Progress 338].) Even the one marriage (his second) in which Lightcap expresses real affection and connection, comes across as more of an extended affair, the protracted lust of a schoolboy, than a deeper connection of souls. Indeed, the fact that Lightcap meets, marries, and then loses this woman (Claire) to death in the relatively short period of approximately two years serves only to reinforce the notion of a protracted affair, an elongated honeymoon—one wonders how this relationship might have turned out if it had lasted longer, as had Lightcap's first marriage which spanned a considerably lengthier period. The fact that Lightcap, after Claire's

death, consoles himself by engaging in a series of fleeting, tawdry affairs arguably only reinforces this perception of individual instability.

Clearly, then, The Fool's Progress embodies an intentional modern application of a four-centuries-old genre. Again, however, arises the question of "why?" Why specifically utilize such a literary and rhetorical approach? Much of the answer lies in Abbey's reasons and impetus for writing. Most of Abbey's works created some level of controversy. Though commonly perceived by many readers as a writer concerned with the environment and social/personal freedoms, Abbey, as mentioned in this thesis' introduction, nonetheless attempted to goad (at one point or another) just about anyone whose ear (or, rather, reading-eye) he could catch. Indeed, in the introduction (entitled "Preliminary Remarks") to his 1988 collection of essays entitled One Life at a Time, Please, Abbey concludes, "[i]f there's anyone still present whom I've failed to insult, I apologize. Cheers!" (5) What alarmed many about this forewarning is that in the waning years of his life, Abbey appeared to take the old adage to heart: One Life at a Time, Please and The Fool's Progress both

often go out of their ways to be as offensive as possible to as many as possible.

One wonders, then, about Abbey's state of mind during this period. Columnist David Horsley writes, "The Fool's Progress had all the marks of being written by a dying man." Indeed, in 1982, at the age of fifty-five, Abbey was diagnosed with terminal cancer and told he had only six months left to live. Though the diagnosis ultimately proved wrong, Abbey soon discovered that he was, after all, dying of a rare disease known as esophageal varices. Throughout the last seven years of his life (the majority of which were spent working on The Fool's Progress) Abbey suffered endless bleeding bouts during which the walls of his esophagus would break down, causing massive internal hemorrhaging. The fact that he lived as long as he did surprised his doctors. Might this near-death existence have influenced Abbey to push even his own rhetorical limits?

Nonetheless, this speculation ultimately returns to the question of why Abbey chose the picaresque genre. An analysis of the work's rhetoric reveals much: in presenting the protagonist as a picaro-like "fool" with all the low-

class, roguish traits and attitudes such designation implies, as well as then creating a structural and rhetorical framework presented in the episodic manner a picaresque commonly inhabits, Abbey creates for himself a literary world in which he has license hitherto unknown in his previous works: he vents. Luis Alberto Urrea, a writer of Mexican-American descent (quoted at the beginning of this chapter) sums up: "Oh my, Ed, you lying bastard. After writing countless books in which you decry America as just the opposite of free and open--after doing that very thing in the same book--after seducing us with battle cries based on the very spoiling of this land by overcrowd[ing], you fall for [. . .] scapegoating" (Urrea 44). Such offensive passages as Urrea refers to tempted some readers to summarily dismiss all of Abbey's works; for example, fellow writer Greg McNamee, after reading an advance copy of The Fool's Progress, implored Abbey to remove the offensive rhetoric, asking if he "[w]anted to be explained away like [fascism supporter] Ezra Pound" (Bishop 167). Urrea's reaction exemplifies McNamee's admonition; nonetheless, Urrea, though both philosophically and personally insulted by Abbey's later rhetoric, ultimately

concludes that Abbey is his "favorite [living] writer" (45). Similarly, critic E. A. Mares, despite the offensive rhetoric, declared The Fool's Progress "one of the four greatest picaresque works [ever] written" (27). Obviously Abbey stirred controversy, but one wonders what advantage there is to creating what amounts to intended alienation. Whereas controversy is often, in the final analysis, constructive, hatred and intolerance are not.

As stated earlier, M. M. Bakhtin, in The Dialogic Imagination, states that "[t]he living utterance [. . .] cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue." In his essay "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff," he adds, "[l]iterature is an inseparable part of culture and it cannot be understood outside the total context of the entire culture of a given epoch" (2). The picaresque developed during a time of reassessment. Abbey, seemingly disillusioned with a country and world peopled by a human race in a perceived stage of collapse, reassessed the world and its inhabitants (himself included) throughout his lifetime. During the last years of his life his attacks grew steadily more

heated, vehement, and double-edged. Consider the following passage from his journals written a year before he died:

Yuppie Liberalism:

They hate segregation in South Africa (apartheid) but have nothing to say about the one-party dictatorships north of there.

They demand a Martin Luther King holiday while lumping Lincoln and Washington together in a single "President's Day."

They love Negroes, Mexicans and Indians (our official minorities), but prefer not to live near them or send their children to their schools.

They support Feminist fantasies but ignore discrimination against young white working-class males (affirmative action).

They support civil rights but seem unaware of or indifferent to the concentration of wealth and power in America (i.e., one percent of the population controls thirty-four percent of the country's wealth, while ten percent controls sixty-eight percent) as a threat to democracy.

They promote economic Growth while ignoring the effects of Growth upon our air, water, soil, wildlife, open space, wilderness, etc.

Neo-racism, yupster liberalism, New Age liberalism. (341)

The passage is a difficult, tangled attack; even if one agrees with the main theme, the rhetoric appears consciously designed to make readers uncomfortable. The language is clearly double-edged in its pursuit of outlining hypocrisy, an example of objectification, separation and division commonly referred to as "othering." Patricia Hill Collins, in Black Feminist Thought states, "[o]bjectification is central to this process of oppositional difference. In binary thinking, one element is objectified as the Other, and is viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled" (70). In the above quoted passage, Abbey has objectified a group of humans—identified as "yuppies" or "young, upward-bound urban professionals"—as a flawed, illogical and self-centered contingency, what Abbey evidently sees as example of much of humanity, thus calling into question humanity as a whole. In The Fool's Progress, however, he takes this theme/approach to a much

more outrageous, incendiary level. Consider the following "joke": " 'I'll even lend you the [gasoline-siphon] hose.' (My leettle robber hose, José. My good old Chicano credit card)" (170). To what purpose is the inclusion of such rhetoric? While the earlier passage entitled "Yuppie Liberalism" ostensibly employed "othering" as a tool to make a controversial point, the latter passage from The Fool's Progress appears as simply racist, simple-minded rhetoric-without-point, an example of the offensive discourse Greg McNamee implored Abbey to remove from the novel. Nonetheless, The Fool's Progress also features passages such as the following, thus fanning the flames of controversy:

He [Lightcap] had other memories of Bumblebee Peak. He remembered the night he walked those six uphill miles after learning that another drugged and brain-retreaded crackpot had pulled a gun on another Kennedy. On to Chicago! shouted the jubilant Robert. Minutes later he was a goner, shot down in a Los Angeles hotel. Henry wept when he heard the news on

his pickup radio and he wept for two hours more as he trudged up the mountain. Weeping, he climbed the stony trail with thirty pounds of booze and grub in the pack on his back, and wept for Robert Kennedy and Jack Kennedy, for Medgar Evers and Malcolm X and Ché Guevara, for the latest defeat in the hopeless attempt to stop a useless one-sided dishonorable war. He wept for himself, he wept for his country, he wept for the death of democracy. Long time dying, never fully born. (348)

When such seemingly contrary passages ("leettle robber hose," "he [. . .] wept for Ché Guevara and Medgar Evers") are juxtaposed, such rhetorical points suggest either a schism within the character's philosophies, an apparent change within the character (the two passages occur some thirteen years apart in narrative time), or some combination of both. Either way, an ongoing process of reassessment seems apparent.

Ed Marston labeled Abbey "a furious, over-educated hillbilly"; in The Fool's Progress, Abbey concurs. Abbey,

in turn, also labels practically everyone else. (An irony is apparent in that, in his attempt to decry Abbey, Marston resorts to no less questionable rhetoric than Abbey.) Such rhetoric is unsettling, offensive, divisive and justifiably prone to create anger. Its inclusion, employment and, ultimately, value are clearly open to question. Abbey claimed to have written to "wake up people." For better or worse, through application and employment of the picaresque, a genre long known to explore the darker, more abhorrent aspects of humanity and thus generate controversy and even outrage, that is what he does in The Fool's Progress.

CHAPTER THREE

FEET OF CLAY:

ABBHEY'S RHETORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of influencing of the mind by means of words?

-Socrates, quoted in Plato's Phaedrus

I am invited to contribute [an essay] to the Antaeus nature issue, but the editor said it must be 'non-controversial.' How can anything of any genuine intellectual interest to grown-ups be 'non-controversial'?"

-Edward Abbey, from his personal journals

Among Edward Abbey's many goals, the novel as a literary signpost of intellectual achievement stood paramount. Ed Mears, a boyhood friend of Abbey's, recalls that even as a child Abbey was so fascinated by and devoted to literature that "he went out to pick blackberries and he took a book along. [I asked,] '[h]ow many blackberries are

you going to pick with your hand on a book?' " (Cahalan 97)

In high school Abbey wrote short stories and worked on the high school newspaper; in college he continued to write both fiction and nonfiction as well as edit the university journal, The Thunderbird. Indeed, Abbey's need to "deliberately startle people" was apparent even at this early stage of his life: he was fired from his post as editor of The Thunderbird and the journal put on hiatus—which eventually lasted ten years—after Abbey emblazoned one issue's cover with a quote from Voltaire reading "[m]ankind will never be free until the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest," attributing the passage to Louisa May Alcott. Though Abbey later referred to the incident as a "silly [and] stupid stunt" (Solheim and Levin 148), it was indicative of the often flippant and more importantly provocative rhetorical manner Abbey would take throughout his literary life.

At the age of twenty-four Abbey won a Fulbright Fellowship to Edinburgh University in Scotland; six years later, after having had two novels published, he also won a Wallace Stegner Creative Writing Fellowship to Stanford. On his twenty-fifth birthday, Abbey wrote a "thorough

Inventory of the Self" in his journals, covering several pages. Filled with constant references to literature and literary artists, it sums up his goals with the following: "The Novel. Have written one-fourth of a magnificent novel [Jonathan Troy, his first], will have it finished by October; afterwards, about eight more even greater. My favorite predecessors: Mann, Dostoyevski, Mark Twain and, above all, JOYCE" (emphasis Abbey's) (Confessions of a Barbarian 15).

Abbey's first novel, the "magnificent" work referred to above, however, was clearly written more to impress readers with the author's self-perceived facile usage of rhetoric than to present an interesting and compelling story, a defect Abbey later deemed "the obvious faults of the beginner." Consider the following passage:

He was awakened, hearing laughter, in the dark tunnel of the night, caught between frayed dreams, and sat up and stared into the blackness, hearing from the other end of the room now, weaving through the dark, not the wild trill of leaves in laughter which had awakened him, but only the dismal whine,

the dim and melancholy wind (like the song
of a ghost in the black and ruined farmhouse
which rose, shaking and creaking with misery
and age, from dark tangles of bramble-briar
and hawthorn, hedged in by plum trees grown
wild and apple trees grown tall and shaggy
and barren, fronting a yard of Queen Anne's
Lace and waist-high witch grass, trailing
across its black eyes a hairy skein of
Virginia Creeper and volunteer columbine,
facing the narrow rutty rocky road that once
was and in flood-time still was the bed of a
creek, pushing up above its sagging walls
and black splintered boards a sway-backed
roof as cracked and open as a trellis, with
the soft-moulded remains of a red-brick
chimney where a catbird family nested in the
spring and early summer, where a
whippoorwill haunted himself in the autumn,
beyond the last farm beyond Falling Rock
Cabin way up the hollow in the vine-covered
hills behind Tanomee, the old farm which

nobody wanted any more and which nearly everybody had forgotten except the boy and (in the fall) the red-jacketed hunters from town with their clean shotguns and pipes and wrinkled eyes on the lookout for rabbits, squirrels, Ringnecks, wild turkeys) of his father, old Nat Troy, rolled asleep in his stolen Army blankets and turning in a nightmare, creaking the broken springs, the oboe sound of his father's snore, a sound too familiar and elemental and old, too interveined with the bedrock of his being and existence, with the stream of his history from its black beginning to its gray present, [. . .] (243-44)

This is barely half of the sentence; the passage continues in a similar, obvious, labored stream-of-consciousness manner. Here, Abbey exhibits the ability to construct and maintain complex, detailed, and multi-layered prose; however, the passage's sheer complexity and obvious manipulation of mechanics is arguably its most interesting feature. The actual information, as it is rhetorically

conveyed, reads as trite and wearisome. It appears as if Abbey is consciously attempting to emulate, in his own manner, the variegated, enigmatic prose of his personal literary hero of the time, James Joyce. (Interestingly, though Abbey later claimed disillusionment with Joyce's works including Ulysses, The Fool's Progress, like Ulysses, exhibits a fascination with human excrement.) Yet, unlike complex Joyce works such as Ulysses or Finnegans Wake, Jonathan Troy, as a work regarded in its entirety, amounts to little: while exhibiting Abbey's abilities at the sentence level, it fails as a whole. Tedious and often boring (the reader views the protagonist and his actions through a curiously detached lens, the result, much of the time, of Abbey's overwrought rhetoric), Abbey himself summed up many of the book's faults not long after finishing it:

Proofreading the galley prints of Jonathan Troy was a discouraging task. The book seems even worse than I had thought. Very juvenile, naïve, clumsy, pretentious. I tried to do everything at once, and succeeded in almost nothing. Too much empty

rhetoric, not enough meat and bone. Not convincing. All the obvious faults of the beginner. (Confessions of a Barbarian 114)

In fact, the text of Jonathan Troy literally says much the same. In a passage that not only sums up the novel's faults but also introduces a rhetorical move as well as a theme common to Abbey's future works (self criticism/self-deprecating humor), a character in Jonathan Troy, Professor Feathersmith, outlines the faults of his own fictional first novel, The Lyric Cry:

He [Feathersmith] reappeared somewhat flustered, pinker than usual, and fluttering a thin manuscript. Some of the problems (he said) with which I am particularly concerned, such as consistency of characterization, narrative continuity, scrupulous clarity in presentation, credible psychological motivation, integrity of purpose, authenticity of dialog and description, and the orderly development of structural elements . . . (Abbey's ellipsis)

(192)

As Professor Feathersmith wrote to impress the literary world but instead realized his own literary failure, Abbey also wrote the novel Jonathan Troy to impress the literary world—and was equally disheartened with his efforts.

Jonathan Troy appears meant more to impress rhetorically and mechanically than to tell the straightforward and basic coming-of-age/adolescent angst tale that is its basic fodder.

In writing his next novel, The Brave Cowboy (1956), a change came over Abbey. Less concerned with impressive sentence-level rhetoric, Abbey appears motivated primarily by conveying the story itself. Albeit the text is often given over to long philosophically-bound passages, especially in the oft-stilted dialogue he periodically assigns his characters, Abbey's passion takes precedence over his need to impress in terms of sentence-level literary skills, thus creating a far more successful work. The Brave Cowboy is a simple, at times two-dimensional story: the "good guy," embodied in the form of a lone and near-powerless but noble individual, versus the "bad guy," embodied in several representative forms, though all emblematic of a smothering, omnipotent government out of

control—something of a David-versus-Goliath motif, though with a markedly different outcome. Very much a product of the cold war period of the time, Brave Cowboy examines the great American myth of the cowboy as rugged individualist out of his legendary element—if, indeed, that element ever truly existed. The theme is similar to other works of the period including the novel (and resultant film) Shane (1949) and the film High Noon (1952). In fact, The Brave Cowboy appears to bear more than a passing similarity with High Noon in terms of authorial motivation. According to cultural historian Margot Henriksen, High Noon was consciously crafted by screenwriter Carl Foreman as a commentary on the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities “witch-hunt” hearings (68); Brave Cowboy explores similar territory, especially in terms of character motivation and plight and resultant government response.

Indeed, the basic theme of the novel had played on Abbey’s mind long before he ever began writing Jonathan Troy as evidenced in the following 1951 journal entry:

December 10, 1951—Edinburgh. My favorite melodramatic theme: the harried anarchist, a wounded wolf, struggling toward the green hills,

or the black-white alpine mountains, or the purple golden desert range and liberty. Will he make it? Or will the FBI shoot him down on the very threshold of wilderness and freedom? (10)

Some three years after making this entry and while writing The Brave Cowboy, Abbey unwittingly summed up the work's eventual form and rhetorical success: "December 27, 1954-Albuquerque. Some progress on The Brave Cowboy; 125 pages written so far. Pretty good-tight taut compact stuff, I believe" (122).

Abbey continued this "tight taut compact stuff" in his next work of fiction, Fire On the Mountain (1962). In Fire On the Mountain, however, Abbey's descriptive skills leave the development phase first broached in Jonathan Troy, coming to much fuller fruition. In Fire On the Mountain, Abbey has learned the value of using only the words needed rather than drowning the reader, so to speak, with tedious verboseness. For example, first consider the following passage from Jonathan Troy:

He got up and went to the window and looked down at the glistening street, at the asphalt shining with an almost immanent wetness and lucency, at the blurred lights glowing through the undersea daylight. The air was surprisingly dark, filled with a mist of drizzling rain, gloomy and green, a marine atmosphere fathoms down where the bent light from the sun, submerged in a liquid air, floated and swayed, exiled. (38)

In this passage, Abbey's descriptive rhetoric consists mostly of vague, generalized shapes and colors; indeed, the words "undersea daylight" really have no clear, descriptive meaning at all within the context of the passage, an example of what Abbey soon after deemed "empty rhetoric." Furthermore, the second half of this two-sentence passage merely tells, rather than shows, the reader what to feel. Such vague, yet overwritten and needlessly verbose rhetoric is a clear illustration of why Jonathan Troy is an emotionally uninvolving work. Now consider the opening of Fire On the Mountain: "Brightest New Mexico. In that vivid light each rock and tree and cloud and mountain existed with a kind of force and clarity that seemed not natural

but supernatural. Yet it also felt as familiar as home, the country of dreams, the land I had known from the beginning" (3). When compared to the passage from Jonathan Troy, the opening of Fire On the Mountain makes evident Abbey's comment regarding "tight taut compact stuff"; the passage quickly evokes a clear portrait that shows, rather than tells, the reader what has captured the narrator's interest as well as why it has done so. Clearly, Abbey's rhetorical skills have improved.

Why/how does this passage from Fire On the Mountain work? First, the chapter is simply labeled "1." There is no title, not even "Chapter 1," just the Arabic numeral denoting the singular or first. Hence, the incomplete opening sentence ("Brightest New Mexico") functions as a heading, practically a dateline as is commonly found at the beginning of a newspaper article, to set place. Yet through the addition of the modifier brightest, not only is setting established, but the narrator's conception and even personal feeling regarding the setting begins to take shape. Following this simple, incomplete sentence/declaration is a comparatively long (twenty-six word) sentence containing four usages of the conjunction

"and." Yet, though definitely a complete and much longer complex sentence, it is elementary, almost childish in tone. Furthermore, through the employment of repetition as held together by the repeated conjunction "and," this second sentence functions as an extension of the first sentence: "brightest" is thus further defined as "vivid light" which then illuminates (for the narrator and, hence, reader) what makes up this particular "New Mexico": "each rock and tree and cloud and mountain." "Brightest," after next being further defined as "vivid light," takes on an even greater, somewhat mystical aspect: "a kind of force and clarity that seemed not natural but supernatural." Already, a simple landscape has, through word choice and rhetorical structuring, created a setting and tone and established a metaphysical, symbolic and spiritual essence. The third and final sentence ties this observation to the narrator and explains its significance. Yet it, too, remains elementary in tone. Why? Because the narrator, it soon turns out, is a twelve-year-old boy. Hence, Abbey has presented compound and complex observation, rumination and philosophy, in a manner which befits the narrator and therefore, the narration. Furthermore, repetition ("each

rock and tree and cloud and mountain") appears in order to drive home one particular facet, that of the overwhelming and ultimate reality of the earth as place, or, as stated in the third sentence, "home": the one primal connection all humanity shares, "the land I had known from the beginning."

The primary strength of both The Brave Cowboy and Fire on the Mountain is in Abbey's descriptive skills; the biggest weakness of each is the dialogue Abbey assigns his characters. Both books share similar themes: the loss of rights of the individual to a government out of control. Determined to drive home his points, Abbey never misses an opportunity to deliver a speech through his characters' mouths. Indeed, this is most painfully obvious in the jail scenes of The Brave Cowboy. Consider the following passage:

"Maybe so," Bondi said; "maybe so. But I'm not ready for that. It's more convenient for me to stick it out for a while, to try to make an honest living introducing a little philosophy into the heads of engineers, druggists, future politicians. Don't think for a moment that I

imagine myself as some sort of anarchist hero. I don't intend to fight against Authority, at least not out in the open. (I may do a little underground pioneering.) When they say 'I recant everything' I'll just mumble something out of the corner of my mouth. When they tell us to stand at attention and salute I'll cross the fingers of my left hand. When they install the dictaphones--by the way, is it true that G-Man Hoover's slogan is 'Two Dictaphones in Every Home'?--and the wire tapping apparatus and the two-way television I'll install defective fuses in the switchbox. When they ask me if I am now or ever have been an Untouchable I'll tell them that I'm just a plain old easy-going no-account Jeffersonian anarchist." (104-105)

This from a character asked simply why he won't break out of prison. Granted, Abbey does make his point about the alarming and increasing intrusion of the government on the private life of the citizen--the problem is just that he uses a sledgehammer to do so. Clearly, then, Abbey's most

powerful rhetorical skills, at this early stage of his literary career, lie in his descriptive abilities.

Yet, despite displaying uneven levels of abilities in his writing skills, Abbey had, by this point, found his literary "voice" in that he was no longer struggling with the mechanical aspects of writing evidenced in Jonathan Troy. Nonetheless, although The Brave Cowboy was made into a commercial Hollywood film the same year that Fire On the Mountain was published, none of his works had thus far become a big success either commercially or critically (he had, however, received a number of favorable, though minor, critical reviews). Still driven by literary ambition, Abbey felt the need to create a critical, if not also commercial, success--i.e. to be taken seriously by the literary world. Referring to himself as "America's famous unknown author," Abbey attempted a breakthrough, writing several novels during the 1960s that were, nonetheless, rejected by publishers; ultimately he discussed his situation with his agent and, on his agent's advice, agreed to write a series of essays loosely compiled into book form which would chronicle his three stays as a forest ranger at Arches National Monument in Utah during the late 1950s.

Published under the collective heading Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness (1968), this book, though not much noticed upon first release, eventually became Abbey's first true success both critically and commercially, much to his surprise. Interestingly, Abbey's originally chosen title was Desert Solecism, an appellation arguably more in keeping with the work's underlying theme of human violation of the desert wilderness. His publisher, however, convinced Abbey that the alternate title would be more readily understood by the general public and hence marketable, a point to which Abbey reluctantly agreed—an example of Abbey's ultimate willingness and desire to connect to a larger reading public so as to air his views.

From the beginning, word of mouth spread the book's popularity: here was a work that employed often deceptively simple rhetoric to convey not just the static, cognitive information of an occurrence, image or concept, but more importantly a sense of both the physical and metaphysical nature of existence, both human and otherwise, i.e. what Abbey himself refers to as "[t]he shock of the real" (Desert Solitaire 37). This was a work which capitalized on Abbey's rhetorical strengths: primarily a work of

description, dialogue only comes into play at those rare times when it is needed to aid in a passage's narration. In fact, dialogue doesn't even first appear until the second chapter, and then only in brief, one-sentence questions or comments.

Consider the opening of the first chapter:

This is the most beautiful place on earth.

There are many such places. Every man, every woman, carries in heart and mind the image of the ideal place, the right place, the one true home, known or unknown, actual or visionary. A houseboat in Kashmir, a view down Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, a gray gothic farmhouse two stories high at the end of a red dog road in the Allegheny Mountains, a cabin on the shore of a blue lake in spruce and fir country, a greasy alley near the Hoboken waterfront, or even, possibly, for those of a less demanding sensibility, the world to be seen from a comfortable apartment high in the tender, velvety smog of Manhattan, Chicago, Paris, Tokyo, Rio or

Rome--there's no limit to the human capacity for
the homing sentiment. (1-2)

Or a bit further on:

The wind will not stop. Gusts of sand swirl
before me, stinging my face. But there is
still too much to see and marvel at, the
world very much alive in the bright light
and wind, exultant with the fever of spring,
the delight of morning. Strolling on, it
seems to me that the strangeness and wonder
of existence are emphasized here, in the desert,
by the comparative sparsity of the flora and
fauna: life not crowded upon life as in other
places but scattered abroad in spareness and
simplicity, with a generous gift of space for
each herb and bush and tree, each stem of grass,
so that the living organism stands out bold and
brave and vivid against the lifeless sand and
barren rock. The extreme clarity of the desert
light is equaled by the extreme individuation of
desert life-forms. Love flowers best in openness
and freedom. (26)

In the first passage, Abbey unabashedly appeals to the reader's "homing instinct," directly addressing the emotional level of the reader in an attempt to establish a level of pathos, that ability on the part of a speaker to recognize an audience's inclination and predisposition (often based on compassion) and appeal to those beliefs. In the second, Abbey appeals to "the delight[,] [. . .] strangeness and wonder of existence," a solicitation couched in the metaphysical enigma seemingly inherent to the human existence, again an appeal of pathos. However, in a rhetorical move typical of Abbey, he then uses the connections he has established to next make somewhat satirical points: in the first statement, he observes—and, hence, comments on—how humans are governed (for better or worse) by their "homing instincts"; in the second, he notes how "love"—i.e. tolerance—"flowers best in openness and freedom." Here Abbey establishes a rhetorical strategy he continued to employ in his writings throughout the rest of his life, especially in his nonfiction: observation or discovery followed by polemic.

Interestingly, the aspect of repetition to make prominent a point, first discussed in the passage quoted

from Fire On the Mountain earlier in this chapter, is also apparent in each of the above passages from Desert Solitaire: "each rock and tree and cloud and mountain" (Fire On the Mountain) is echoed, structurally near-verbatim, in the second passage quoted above from Desert Solitaire: "each herb and bush and tree, each stem of grass," and to a lesser extent in the first passage, "[e]very man, every woman" and "[a] houseboat in Kashmir, a view down Atlantic Avenue in Brooklyn, a gray gothic farmhouse two stories high at the end of a red dog road in the Allegheny Mountains, a cabin on the shore of a blue lake in spruce and fir country, a greasy alley near the Hoboken waterfront." Again, repetition is employed to establish a point or philosophy. Much as with his strategy of observation followed by polemic (to broach a viewpoint, philosophy or counterargument), Abbey continued to use repetition (to establish a feature or situation strongly in the reader's mind) as an important part of his rhetorical arsenal throughout the rest of his writing career.

Of even more importance, in Desert Solitaire, Abbey explores and exploits the value of shock as a rhetorical device aimed, if not at enlightenment, then at least at

personal contemplation and evaluation, that is, questioning one's concepts and resultant conclusions. (Indeed, this strategy works hand-in-hand-in an almost chicken and egg relationship-with the approach of observation followed by polemic discussed earlier.) A passage well known for its usage of shock (and placed strategically near the beginning of the book in order to set a tone, yet far enough into the narrative to be effective in terms of surprise) details the seemingly peaceful, nature-loving Abbey suddenly taken by a whimsical "notion to experiment" in terms of killing and death-i.e. to "brain" a rabbit with a stone (the passage is also a clear example of observation followed by polemic):

He [the rabbit] crumples, there's the usual gushing of blood, etc., a brief spasm and then no more. The wicked rabbit is dead.

For a moment I am shocked by my deed
[. . .] But the shock is succeeded by a mild elation. Leaving my victim to the vultures [,] [. . .] I continue my walk with a new, augmented cheerfulness which is hard to understand but unmistakable. What the rabbit has lost in energy and spirit seems added [. . .]

to my own soul. I try but cannot feel any sense of guilt. I examine my soul: white as snow. Check my hands: not a trace of blood. No longer do I feel so isolated from the sparse and furtive life around me, stranger from another world. I have entered into this one. We are kindred all of us, killer and victim, predator and prey, me and the sly coyote, the soaring buzzard, the elegant gopher snake, the trembling cottontail, the foul worms that feed on our entrails, all of them, all of us. Long live diversity, long live the earth! (34)

Interestingly, this calculatedly repellant (though ultimately positive) passage is preceded by a quiet, respectful, tranquil encounter with a doe and her fawn. With the two scenes juxtaposed in such manner, the encounter with the rabbit then becomes more disorienting than anything else, causing the reader to feel displaced, shocked out of any sense of contentment or tranquility with the narrative; in so doing, therefore, the reader also feels a sense of displacement in terms of contentment or tranquility within the personal self-i.e. a questioning of

one's own values and conclusions (an example of the self-assessment so prevalent in The Fool's Progress). The power and importance of such shock was not lost on Abbey; indeed he consciously adopted it as a rhetorical tool.

In 1971, three years after the publication of Desert Solitaire, a novel entitled Black Sun, arguably Abbey's most atypical work, was published. Having by now developed a writing style he apparently felt at ease with, Abbey stepped outside his own rhetorical and stylistic boundaries in Black Sun. Interestingly, Black Sun and The Fool's Progress are Abbey's two most autobiographical works of fiction; they were also often cited by Abbey as his personal favorites. Written around the time of the premature death to cancer of Abbey's then twenty-seven-year-old third wife, Judy, Black Sun follows a loner forest ranger's intense-yet-brief love affair with a young woman that ends in the mysterious disappearance of the woman to a greater, incomprehensible reality (she simply disappears—her death is never confirmed nor denied), resulting in a mental breakdown, of sorts, for the fictional ranger. Often reading more as poetry than prose, Black Sun conveys a shifting, questionable presentation in terms of time

sequence as well as reality; it is often unclear whether events presented are actually occurring or merely remembered, or are even outright fabrications on the part of the protagonist. Consider the following passage which also constitutes the entirety of Chapter Five:

A small meadow. At the upper end stands a glade of aspen trees with quaking leaves, straight slim trunks, the bark vestal white. Beyond the aspens, the darker forest of pine, fir, spruce. A flash of red bisects the darkness, vanishes.

He was drinking from an old wooden water trough below the spring where the wagon trail once led. The trough nothing but a hollowed-out log, the spring only a trickle caught in an earthen dam and guided through a rusty pipe into the log. But the water was clear and cold and sweet. Gazing into it as the circles widen around the drops that fell from his hands, he saw her smiling reflection rise beside his. The sunlight shone through her hair. He felt her

hands move up his back, onto his shoulders, into his hair. She started to laugh. (24)

Like a memory, several of the sentences are fragments including the first, an imitation of the often fragmentary state of memory (indeed the chapter itself seems a fragment). The second sentence establishes the present tense ("stands"). This becomes important in terms of establishing time (i.e. the question of current reality or memory) when juxtaposed with the rest of the chapter, primarily the second paragraph. The third sentence is also an incomplete sentence as it is missing its verb. This begins the suggestion of a timeless quality or state. The first paragraph then ends with a fleeting vision; this suggests the elusiveness of memory as well as the fact that memory, by definition, refers to something past or expired.

The second paragraph introduces past tense ("was," "fell," "saw," "shone," "felt," "started"). Juxtaposed alongside the first paragraph, this suggests that, while the first paragraph primarily establishes the setting (as if the reader is seeing within the narrator's mind, i.e. "setting the stage"), the reader now travels through the memory along with the narrator. The second sentence of the

second paragraph, however, is missing the verb "was" ("[t]he trough [was] nothing but a hollowed-out log"): this, again, suggests a timeless nature, again reflecting the question of what is real, what is memory, and what is possibly merely illusion.

Furthermore, in terms of defining the narrator, the sentence structures also reveal much: the prose, being often fragmented as well as filled with imagery, hints at the protagonist's mental fragmentation and dream-like conception of reality; this returns to the idea of prose as poetry. However, much of this "poetic" quality also appears to have come about due to a lack of sophistication on the part of the protagonist narrator—indeed, some of the passages are not only crude and common sounding, but almost cliché, especially the third-to-last sentence of the chapter: "[t]he sunlight shone through her hair." This poetic crudeness, then, reveals the narrator: capable of confronting and expressing his emotional thoughts, he nonetheless appears to be fairly unsophisticated in how he probes and then articulates those thoughts.

Rhetorical manipulation in terms of time, reality, and fragmentation, a primary feature of Black Sun, does not

again appear in so dominant a form in any of Abbey's other works with one exception: The Fool's Progress. As both these works are largely autobiographical and, even more importantly, extremely personal narratives, this form of telling a story first developed in Black Sun becomes of paramount importance in The Fool's Progress for the same rhetorical reasons: instability on the part of the protagonist-narrator and resultant questions of narrator reliability. Black Sun and The Fool's Progress are Abbey's two least typical works of fiction; rhetorically and stylistically they are also the two most closely related.

The 1970s saw Abbey's most prolific period in terms of literary output and ensuing publication: between 1970 and 1980, Abbey produced three novels, Black Sun, The Monkey Wrench Gang (1975), and Good News (1980), and six collections of essays including Appalachian Wilderness (1970), Slickrock (1971), Cactus Country (1972), The Journey Home (1975), The Hidden Canyon (1978), and Abbey's Road (1979). The following decade saw the publication of two more novels, The Fool's Progress (1988) and Hayduke Lives! (1990, published posthumously), and four more collections of essays, Desert Images (1981), Down the River

(1982), Beyond the Wall (1984), and One Life at a Time, Please (1988). Virtually every one of these works, at some point, employs rhetoric designed to force the reader to assess the world around her or him, as well as to assess the reader's own approach to life; Abbey, obviously, was not able to write a merely neutral text or passage.

While all of Abbey's works (with the possible exception of Jonathan Troy) created some form of controversy, four works especially stirred up philosophical hornet's nests. The first was Desert Solitaire, a work often mentioned within environmentalist communities in the same breath as Henry David Thoreau's Walden (1854), Aldo Leopold's A Sand County Almanac (1949), and Rachel Carson's Silent Spring (1962). Like Thoreau, Leopold and Carson's works, Desert Solitaire questions (among other issues) human involvement within and manipulation of the ecosystem. A particularly favorite target of Abbey's was "growth for the sake of growth," what he referred to as "the ideology of the cancer cell" (The Journey Home 183), thus angering many people whose businesses involved not only growth but the wholesale accession and manipulation of the environment, including mining, farming, manufacturing and

construction; indeed, Desert Solitaire, in terms of timing, is seen by many as a final straw in the literary catalyst/call-to-arms canon of "nature writing"--in the decades since, environmental issues, once a subject primarily of concern among a few scientists, writers, and wary public watchdogs, have entered the mainstream of the public consciousness and forum. While the question of how much of this is due to the influence of Desert Solitaire is obviously debatable, its widespread audience and readership are not.

However, after Desert Solitaire lent its hand in helping generate controversy, three more books of Abbey's created controversy on somewhat different--and controversial--grounds. First, The Monkey Wrench Gang, a novel about "eco-sabotage," took Desert Solitaire's message to new heights. Referred to as everything from an "ecological caper" to a "propaganda novel" (Ronald 183), The Monkey Wrench Gang advocates destruction not only of the physical tools (such as bulldozers, airplanes and billboards) implemented by "developers" and others who see the earth as merely a storehouse for exploitation, but even of the structures thus created by said developers, up to

and including such emblematic constructs as the Glen Canyon Dam and its resultant Lake Powell (referred to in the novel as the "Glen Canyon Damn" and "Lake Foul"). Indeed, outrage was vehement and even violent in reaction to Abbey's rhetoric. In Hayduke Lives!, the sequel to/continuation of The Monkey Wrench Gang, one character mouths the actual reason many felt such anger: asked whether the participants of acts of "eco-sabotage" were "terrorists," the character replies, "No, Oral. They're worse than terrorists. These people attack property. Property, Oral" (148). Over the course of some four-hundred pages in The Monkey Wrench Gang, Abbey makes the overriding point of questioning just what it is that the United States (and other nations representative of similar growth policies) holds most important: the people and the earth they inhabit or the material structures (and the policies thus represented) said people have created. That is, Abbey presents a question of values. Shortly after The Monkey Wrench Gang was released, its film rights were optioned; several years later in 1982 when the option was about to expire, Abbey wrote in his journal, "Gary Snyder, in a letter to Dave Foreman (Earth First!), says they'll

never make a movie of MWG [Monkey Wrench Gang]. And why not? Because MWG attacks not human lives—cheap—but property. And in our culture, property is sacred, valued far above the human being" (280). In Desert Solitaire, Abbey hit a nerve; in The Monkey Wrench Gang, Abbey suggested how to best tear bloodily into that nerve, using every rhetorical wrench at his disposal.

Appearing a little over a decade after The Monkey Wrench Gang (and released only a few months before The Fool's Progress), a collection of essays entitled One Life at a Time, Please struck a new, and for many readers, unexpected nerve: people who had not merely accepted, but wholeheartedly or even emphatically embraced Abbey's earlier messages regarding respect for a vanishing environment (and the humanity, as just one part of the larger parcel, contained within it) were struck dumbfounded. One of the most notorious essays, "Immigration and Liberal Taboos," was originally written on assignment for the Op-Ed page of The New York Times which, nonetheless, summarily rejected the work. Abbey then submitted it to Atlantic, Mother Jones, Harper's, Rolling Stone, Newsweek, and Playboy, all of which also rejected

the essay. Finally it was first published in the small, localized Phoenix publication the New Times before later finding a national audience in One Life at a Time, Please. In the essay, Abbey attacks the question of immigration and the seemingly open and (to him) ineffective border policy between the United States and Mexico. Now Abbey's rhetoric, once an apparent bastion of liberalism (or at least emphatic defiance) in the face of a conservative growth-at-any-cost establishment agenda, took what was to many a stunning and incredibly offensive turn, dividing the inhabitants of North and Central America into racially delineated subgroups of "Hispanics," "American Indians," and "pale-faced honky WASPs." As with The Fool's Progress, many readers questioned why such racist rhetoric, to what possibly greater end. Trying to find a reason, many readers' initial reactions centered around Abbey's stated strategy of "deliberately [writing in an] outrageous or provocative manner" in order to attempt to raise the consciousness of his readers. In fact, Abbey's blatant use of offensive words such as "wetback" and "honky" smacks, for example, of comedian George Carlin's famous "Seven Words" sketch in which Carlin, a contemporary of Abbey who

was, hence, dealing with the same approximate social period, questions why seven particular words were banned from radio and television broadcasts by the Federal Communication Commission. Carlin's thrust was that the words he cited were banned not because of their content, but rather, in final analysis, because of the words themselves, i.e. the simple sounds which make the words, thus calling into question society's standard of and reasons for values. Bakhtin, in his essay "The Problem of Speech Genres" states:

Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects—thematic content, style, and compositional structure—are inseparably linked to

the whole of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. (60)

Abbey and Carlin call into question the links cited by Bakhtin, especially in terms of "the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication." Many readers of "Immigration and Liberal Taboos" viewed Abbey as approaching rhetoric in a vein similar to Carlin's approach; others, however, took Abbey's words for their face value and reacted, understandably, with an immediate sense of clear outrage. Still others scrambled to apologize for or somehow dismiss Abbey's rhetoric. Wendell Berry in "A Few Words in Favor of Edward Abbey" writes, "[h]e [Abbey] is a problem, apparently, even to some of his defenders, who have an uncontrollable itch to apologize for him: 'Well, he did say that. But we mustn't take him altogether seriously. He is only trying to shock us into paying attention' " (1). Adding rhetorical fuel to the fire, Abbey himself provides good reason for a vehement reaction at a "face value" level. In a 1981 journal entry, Abbey writes, "[t]he highest form of literary subtlety, in a corrupt social order, is to tell the plain truth.

They'll think you're kidding. Reviewers can't understand that I mean what I say, and say what I mean" (Confessions of a Barbarian 275).

At the root of the controversy, then, is the paradox which is Abbey: whereas Carlin states the words and then explains the dichotomy of definition and usage, Abbey merely states the words then leaves the situation seemingly unanswered, a riddle for the reader to unravel. (This is arguably a conscious effort to compel a "Reader-Oriented" reading as propounded by such literary theoreticians as Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Jane P. Tompkins and Robert Jauss.) Scott Slovic, in his work Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing states the situation as follows: "Abbey, it seems, delights in luring us to make a commitment to one ideology or another, to one mode of reading or another, only to suddenly pull the rug out from under our feet" (101). Yet a brief look at a passage from "Immigration and Liberal Taboos" places a cloud over this latter interpretation of Abbey's rhetorical strategy:

Even the terminology is dangerous: the old word wetback is now considered a racist insult by all good liberals; and the perfectly correct terms

illegal alien and illegal immigrant can set off charges of xenophobia, elitism, fascism, and the ever popular genocide against anyone careless enough to use them. The only acceptable euphemism, it now appears, is something called undocumented worker. Thus, the pregnant Mexican woman who appears, in the final stages of labor, at the doors of the emergency ward of an El Paso or San Diego hospital, demanding care for herself and the child she's about to deliver, becomes an "undocumented worker." The child becomes an automatic American citizen by virtue of its place of birth, eligible at once for all of the usual public welfare benefits. [. . .] They come to stay and they stay to multiply.

(41-42)

Unlike Carlin's approach of statement followed by analysis and, hence, enlightenment, Abbey's rhetoric here reads as more of a diatribe; xenophobia and elitism are not difficult judgments for a reader to make in light of rhetoric designed to indicate-or fabricate-difference, and furthermore to manipulate rhetorically that perceived

difference into an us-or-them confrontation. Even if one accepts Abbey's argument regarding what he sees as pointless dismissal of terms ("illegal alien" versus "undocumented worker"), the final sentence, "[t]hey come to stay and they stay to multiply," while ostensibly anti-growth rhetoric, ultimately fails to serve any point beyond division as a tool to create prejudice; Collins' observation that "in binary thinking, one element is objectified as the Other, and is [thus] viewed as an object to be manipulated and controlled" (emphasis added) appears all too obvious.

The Fool's Progress, at points within its lengthy text, continues this approach, rarely missing an opportunity to point out that someone is, in some surface-level way, different. Yet, in fairness, both "Immigration and Liberal Taboos" and The Fool's Progress define and address (though in obviously questionable manner) what Abbey considers problematic within society. Consider the following from "Immigration and Liberal Taboos": "The conservatives love their cheap labor; the liberals love their cheap cause. [However,] [n]either group, you will notice, ever invites the immigrants to move into their

homes. Not into their homes!" (emphasis Abbey's) (42)

Returning here to his old strategy of observation followed by polemic, Abbey has made a valid point: talk is cheap and prolific. Nonetheless, he has made the point at severe cost: poisoned by the surrounding vile rhetoric (even here he cannot avoid pointing out division in terms of labeling groups as "conservative" and "liberal"), Abbey's point, and hence Abbey himself as philosopher, is severely tainted, even poisoned.

The rhetoric in The Fool's Progress often appears as having been designed even more to simply provoke or anger the reader on an emotional level than to engage the reader in some level of logical reasoning. Indeed, one of the most offensive aspects of Abbey's rhetoric in The Fool's Progress is his continual depiction of stereotypes and employment of name-calling. Consider the following passages:

Those little Nips are ingenious people, I said. Sony, Datsun, Toyota, Kawasaki, Honda, kamikaze, hari-kari, seppuku, Pearl Harbor, the creeping kudzu vine—how can we ever thank them? And now kelp, seaweed in my soup, what do you

know about that. Wonderful. Well, with a hundred million of the little mothers crammed onto a few islands barely big enough for one half million actual humans, no wonder they eat seaweed. And soybean curd, whales, krill, bird's nests, labels off beer bottles. (29) Certainly, I agreed, males dominate females. [. . .] The explanation however is so obvious it escapes the observation of feminist intellectuals: men are bigger, stronger, more aggressive. [. . .] The debate dragged on for another hour, another month, then collapsed without warning when she abruptly gave up feminism for aerobic dancing. (38-40)

Both these passages initially appear to have little reason other than as intended humor; it is only when The Fool's Progress is taken as a whole that any purpose at all becomes clear, that purpose being to introduce and explore the emotional schism within Lightcap's character. Yet, despite such purpose, Abbey's continuous employment of offensive rhetoric creates an atmosphere of hostility.

Nonetheless, Abbey, in keeping with his own personal character, not only refused to change or retract what he wrote, but instead reveled in the controversy his words generated, even referring to "Immigration and Liberal Taboos" as his "favorite essay" (One Life at a Time, Please 1) and The Fool's Progress as his "best [novel] by far" (Confessions of a Barbarian 351). As Luis Alberto Urrea states, "[c]onsider: where many writers have a pitiable need to be loved, Ed seemed to have a puzzling need to be reviled" (45). Abbey showed such motive in his treatment of the final version of The Fool's Progress: after finishing The Fool's Progress but before submitting it to his publisher, Abbey gave the manuscript to a few trusted writer-friends for comments, including Greg McNamee. McNamee bluntly expressed his reservations in an eleven page letter he wrote to Abbey (referred to briefly in this thesis' previous chapter), a passage from which is quoted here:

I am concerned, and not as an Eastern
Liberal either, with certain aspects of
Lightcap's character, especially his racism.

[. . .] It just doesn't work; his racist cracks are not especially funny or profound, and, worst of all, they detract from a quite sympathetic character, make him much less likeable [. . .] most of the racist cracks are simply wasted words, I'm afraid, that seem to serve no purpose whatever, they're dead weight on the page

[. . .]

I'm afraid they'll—and only they—will make reviewers hostile to a book that should be regarded as important in the body of your work (and I believe The Fool's Progress goes up there with your best writing); I can't really see the point in doing that, even if you do have fun in angering the pundits by poking fun in "outrageous" ways.

Lightcap is likely to be read as Edward Abbey (anyone who has read your essays knows that this novel richly partakes of your own life) and I really don't think your readers want to think of you as someone given to racism. Do you want

to be explained away like Ezra Pound, after all?
I urge you [. . .] to rethink this, and to
excise most, if not all, of the "little brown
people" jokes and diatribes. (Bishop 166-7)

Abbey thanked his friend for his critical commentary, yet made few, if any, changes. Why? What was Abbey after? Was he attempting social commentary or merely having "fun in angering the pundits"? McNamee, later commenting on The Fool's Progress, concluded, "Ed was a provocateur in his writings, but in Fool's, we see beneath that in the character of Lightcap. Ed was a WASP [. . .] He overdid the hyperbole, but Ed was Ed" (Bishop 167). Scott Slovic, however, sees another possibility: "The progress of Abbey's archetypal 'fool' is really a decline into physical and emotional decay; the psychological center of the book is the narrator's memory, the persistent tug of the past and his sense of essential, unrelinquished identity" (Ronald 261). While both McNamee and Slovic see Abbey's past as an influence on his later writings, Slovic brings into question the influence of Abbey's later years on his writings, a "decline into physical and emotional decay," thus turning over the same ground as David Horsley when the

latter states that, "The Fool's Progress had all the marks of being written by a dying man." This returns to the question of whether or not Abbey's impending death sentence influenced his writing.

A common trait of the picaresque novel is a change on the part of the picaro in his or her views, beliefs and attitudes. Lazaro, for example, is continuously "educated" by his masters to the harshness of life. Near the beginning of the work, Lazaro's first master tricks Lazaro into having his head smacked against a statue. Lazaro comments, "[i]t seemed to me that at that moment I awoke out of the simplicity in which I had remained like a sleeping child" (46). Indeed, a key passage in The Fool's Progress indicates that Lightcap developed racist tendencies as result of circumstance and experience including personal frustration. Working as a social worker and hating the job (as Abbey had also done), Lightcap finds himself becoming hostile to a person and focusing that hostility on the person's race, a revelation Lightcap also finds suddenly disconcerting:

What am I gonna do if they take [my
television set] back? the old man explained,

disregarding Henry's question. I stay up in that little room by myself all duh fuckin' time, I got nuttin' to do, duh kids none of 'em ever come to see me and they don't let me come to see dem so what am I sposed to do up there all by muself all the time . . . shoot my fuckin' brains out?

As a matter of fact, Henry thought—and stopped. What's happening to me? Something queer is happening to me." (284)

In a 1952 entry in his journals (some twelve years before being employed as a social worker), Abbey comments on his hatred of apartheid amid his regard for all humans as fellow beings:

There's a core of violence in me that might, I feel, take an intense pleasure in looking at Malan [Daniel François, South African prime minister, 1948-1954] and other Afrikaners over gun-sights. But could I pull the trigger? In cold blood? I don't know. In a hurry, in the rush and confusion of battle, I'm certain I could maim and murder my fellow men about as easily as

anyone else can, and it does seem to be easy.

But I don't think I want a job on any firing squad. No, I certainly don't. (Confessions of a Barbarian 60)

In this passage, Abbey confesses compassion and outrage over racial tyranny, but, even more revealing, confusion, a primary and primal characteristic of the human race. Might this confusion, then, also be a rhetorical aspect of Abbey's writings? Whereas he states a preference for goading people out of their complacencies, might he also be governed, same as the many people he often targets in his works, by mere human tendencies, by the fact that he is, at his core, as human and hence flawed as anyone else? No better nor worse than the rest of humanity?

In the chapter detailing his vocation as a social worker, Lightcap, while experiencing frustration with his predicament and a sometimes resulting contempt for his fellow human beings, also clearly cares for the people he is attempting to help. Consider the following passage:

But they stole their checks [Lightcap said].
Those women, they don't have any money at all,

Mrs. Kelly. The nights are cold, their children are sick and hungry . . .

Now Mr. Lightcap, don't get emotional about it. Mrs. Kelly spoke rapidly, intensely. Keep yourself cool, calm and efficient. Our job is to investigate applications and process the papers. We mail out the checks to those who are eligible. It's the responsibility of the Post Office Department to deliver the checks to the correct address. It's the responsibility of the welfare client to get her check before some other welfare client steals it. Your job is to get your work reports in on time . . .

[. . .]

Mrs. Kelly, I promised them I'd be out there right away!

Never promise a welfare client anything. You're not leaving this office till you finish your paperwork. You understand? [. . .]

Numbly, dumbly, humbly, he shambled back to the clerk's desk. (279)

Though told to remain passive and impersonal by his superiors, Lightcap clearly cares about the clients he serves, yet finds himself forced to be a mere part of an uncaring, impersonal bureaucracy. Here Abbey observes humanity as flawed, self-centered and illogical—and realizes he is, despite his best effort, no more than a fellow member. What is appearing to emerge is indeed a schism within both Abbey and his fictional alter ego Lightcap: the ability to simultaneously love and hate, especially humanity.

Luis Alberto Urrea concludes his meditations about Abbey's personal and political motives with the following: "I admire Edward Abbey. [. . .] I also decry his ignorance and his duplicity. Guess what: Ed Abbey had feet of clay. Just like me" (46). Ignorance, duplicity, and questionably-wizened feet of clay, then, set the stage for the wanderings and ruminations of a fool, a picaro, a protagonist who, for better or worse, is both highly likeable and detestably flawed, a man who both loves and hates the world which he finds himself a part of. Or is such reasoning merely an example of what Berry calls "an uncontrollable itch to apologize for [Abbey]," what Urrea

refers to as doing "backflips just to defend my favorite writer"? Or indeed, is the entire question, thus formed, nothing more than a mere pathway on a reading-fool's progress?

CHAPTER FOUR

A "BROKEN-DOWN, BICAMERAL MIND": AMBIVALENCE AND DUALISM IN THE FOOL'S PROGRESS, AN AN EXPLORATION OF RHETORICAL, PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL DISORIENTATION

Enmity and Hatred of course may be
illustrated by the opposite considerations.

-Aristotle, The Rhetoric

I am accused of being a hater. What those
two-bit book reviewers cannot see is that
every hate implies a corresponding love.

-Edward Abbey

The Fool's Progress is a novel that Abbey planned and worked on sporadically throughout his adult life. As early as 1956, he began a work entitled The Good Life, a story centered around his boyhood in Appalachia. Although he set the manuscript aside in the mid 1960s (much of the uncompleted manuscript would eventually find its way into The Fool's Progress), the project remained on Abbey's mind; in an interview in the late 1960s he stated, "I am going

to write a novel with a Pennsylvania setting. It will concern farm life in the 1930s. This is a book I have wanted to write for a long time. I guess I have been thinking about it for twenty years" (qtd. in Cahalan 242). Then, in the introduction to his 1977 collection of essays entitled The Journey Home, Abbey gave the projected work another name of sorts: "my highest ambition is to compose one good, very long novel—The Fat Masterpiece" (xii). He then began to use this designation for his "work-in-progress" in interviews and letters (Bishop 161). Abbey planned the novel to be a culmination not only of his personal life experiences, but also of his rhetorical skills: a zenith in his development as a writer, a veritable compendium of the craft he had honed throughout his literary life.

The Fool's Progress and Black Sun, as stated earlier, are Abbey's two most atypical as well as personal novels; they also share many similar rhetorical approaches. Paramount among these similarities is the way in which Abbey constructs time and, hence, narrator reliability. In Black Sun, a work constructed so as to convey mood, emotion and atmosphere more than point-by-point chronological

progression, the only definite aspect of time is that the work opens in the present and closes in the present—the bulk of the story, in which the protagonist Will Gatlin meets, falls intensely in love with and then mysteriously loses his ultimate love (Sandy), has already occurred. Gatlin begins the story a loner; Gatlin ends the story a loner. Hence, the narrative begins in medias res or “mid-story,” i.e. at a point in time after the events which make up most of the narrative actually began. What occurs in-between the present time opening and closing of the novel is an interesting assemblage of past, present, and future. No clear, perceptible order emerges, except in short, random spurts; many episodes, in fact, are unclear as to whether they are actually occurring, are instead memories, or in fact never occurred at all, being rather fantasies of what might have happened in some abstract future dream state. The work, then, becomes something of a threnody, an exploration of and rumination about love, loss, joy and pain.

Nonetheless, in a move to create some level of overriding structural order, Abbey employs a simple rhetorical device: tense shifts. Passages dealing with

Gatlin's psychological state of disarray and collapse due to his loss are presented in the present tense; passages that relate generally happier episodes in which Gatlin and Sandy are together employ the past tense. Hence, the protagonist, at the time the reader views him (i.e. the time of the text's composition), is in a continual state of aftermath, what Ann Ronald terms "emotionally frozen chapters of living death" (157).

This seemingly simple yet effective manipulation of tense also becomes primary to the presentation of events in The Fool's Progress. Indeed, whereas Black Sun begins in medias res, The Fool's Progress not only begins in the same state but goes as far as to tell the reader as much. After a short (two page) Prelude (which serves to signal Lightcap's initial consciousness as a living person, though he nonetheless is presented as something of an enigma), The Fool's Progress begins with a chapter entitled "1 In Medias Res, Arizona[.]" As with every chapter in the novel, this title is presented to indicate a state of being or place of situation (or both). Here, the opening "In Medias Res, Arizona," however, is also the beginning of the first sentence—Abbey is really driving home his point

regarding a start somewhere in the middle of the story. Hence, the opening paragraph reads: "In Medias Res, Arizona . . . slamming the door behind her. Slams it so hard the replastered wall around the doorframe shivers into a network of fine reticulations, revealing the hand of a nonunion craftsman" (3). The narrative begins, it turns out, at the end of an argument between Lightcap and his third (and final) wife, Elaine. She storms out of the house and he begins to brood and mourn, as much (or more) for himself than her or their relationship. Now begins forty-one pages (divided into seven subchapters labeled with Roman numerals) of ruminations about the present, the past, the possible future, and, as in Black Sun, episodes that may very well be nothing more than fantasy. Pages 3-13, comprising subchapter I, is written in the present tense, and conveys what is occurring to the protagonist at the present moment, the same rhetorical approach utilized in the opening of Black Sun. Subchapter II, true to form, changes tense: in conveying a series of past events during which Lightcap and Elaine were still together, Abbey employs past tense. Subchapter III, however, steps outside the form. The first sentence is written in present tense,

yet the rest of the chapter is in past tense. Why?

Partially as segue and partially as aspect of the protagonist's mind. While subchapter II details several episodes between Lightcap and Elaine, subchapter III introduces a new character contained within Lightcap's memory, "Melanie." Melanie is indicative of Lightcap's primary difficulty in terms of maintaining a marriage: infidelity. Consider the opening line (which, like the book's chapter titles, functions practically as a topic sentence): "Actually I'm thinking of Melanie again. And the monogamy problem. When I stepped from the shower, toweling my head [. . .]" (21). The subchapter then continues in past tense. This is a rhetorical device Abbey often employs, in varying manner, throughout the novel: present tense as an introduction or segue between subchapters as well as a reminder to the reader that these incidences are occurring within the protagonist's mind; indeed, much of this novel, including apparent conversation (see below) occurs within Lightcap's thoughts. Subchapter IV then returns to Lightcap's present post-argument situation and resultant ruminations, again (initially) in present tense.

Abbey continues this pattern of tense shifts as related to what is current and what is past to the end of Chapter One. Throughout this chapter, the reader is presented with a series of seemingly random episodes and ruminations. Indeed, the first chapter, true to its title, presents the practically incoherent ramblings of a disordered, disoriented mind, one caught in the middle of a situation and confused as to where it has been as well as where it should go. Abbey's rhetoric in fact reflects his protagonist's current state: aside from the disorientation obviously brought about by the protagonist's domestic strife, there is another good reason for Lightcap's state of mind (which the tense shifts underscore): from the chapter's outset, Lightcap is drunk and getting steadily more so. In fact, it is not until the final subchapter of Chapter One (subchapter VII) that Lightcap appears to have reached some level of sobriety (and resulting mental clarity), an event related, again, in present tense: at this point, Lightcap has made it through the preceding day and night, and is now experiencing the alcohol-influenced "morning after" or hangover.

However, another rhetorical device is also at work in this novel, one which, like tense shifts, is employed to create a question of narrator reliability as well as furthermore allowing the reader a level of objectivity: point of view shifts. Chapter One begins in the first person, creating an intimate, first-hand picture of Lightcap's world through his own viewpoint. However, on the second page, a sudden, disorienting shift occurs: the narrative enters, for one sentence, the third person, only to return immediately to first person: "Henry indulges in a favored fantasy. I shall live the clean hard cold rigors of an ascetic philosopher" (4). The narrative then remains first person until subchapter IV. Subchapter IV begins with the first paragraph in first person, then shifts to third for the next six paragraphs, only to abruptly shift back to first person (21-22). Again, why?

Of the point of view approaches common to Western literature, first person is the most personal—the reader is inside the narrator's mind, actually experiencing the story along with the narrator. Third person, on the other hand, is an external observation, a relation of events from an independent witness. Hence, in first person, a reader is

able to perceive only what the narrator perceives, and only within the limits of that narrator, thus allowing for the possible question of narrator reliability. On the contrary, third person, by design, allows the reader to observe events of which the first person narrator may not be aware, including external observations of the protagonist, hence allowing another dimension to enter into the character presentation/portrayal. Abrupt point of view shifts, therefore, create the notion of an internal dialogue within the protagonist suggesting a battle with self, a continual state of self-evaluation; the reader is thus allowed to view the protagonist at an extremely personal level, to experience vicariously internal emotional struggles and instabilities. Indeed, Lightcap often views and evaluates himself. Consider, for example, the conflicting (and ultimately converging) views of Lightcap in the first two paragraphs of subchapter IV:

I gnaw my crust, inhale the fumes from an empty bottle. She loved me, did she not? Elaine, I mean. Nearly three years together, through the better and the worse. It seemed much longer. And now, suddenly, she is gone. I feel

her absence as a tangible, living, palpable presence. But when I look—she is not here. Where she was is nothing. The void. The intense inane. A psychic amputation.

Henry raises his dark head, sees himself reflected in the black night glass of the window. Deux Henris! A homely man with coarse black oily hair, buzzard's beak, jaw like a two-by-four. He grins his evil wolfish grin. Nobody so wicked in appearance could feel such pain, right? Stands to reason. But the face fades out, obliterated by ennui, leaving the empty moronic grin which fades in turn. (21)

The first paragraph, presented in the first person, describes an internal, brooding, self-pitying protagonist, one who, as hinted at by the closing sentence, is psychically removed ("amputated," suggesting a loss of something once possessed or known) from the world around him—this is Lightcap in the spiritual, metaphysical state. The second paragraph, told in third person, instantly takes the external viewpoint, suggesting Lightcap sees himself as another person would see him upon independent observation:

"Henry raises his dark head, sees himself reflected in the black night glass of the window." But, as if that passage wasn't enough to let the reader know that there are two points of view occurring within this work, Abbey immediately adds the passage, "Deux Henris!" Two worlds, that of the internal, spiritual psyche and that of the external, corporeal and objective material world; Lightcap, taking the reader along with him, inhabits both.

Throughout the novel, Abbey continues to shift both tense and point of view. However, an overriding pattern quickly evolves. The work alternates main chapters between the present plight of Lightcap (odd-numbered chapters) and the past (even numbered chapters). Similar to the approach utilized in Black Sun, Lightcap-in-the-present is presented primarily in present tense, while Lightcap-in-the-past is in past tense. (Nonetheless, as previously illustrated, within this framework smaller shifts continue to occur, signifying significant events remembered or relived.) The past chapters (beginning with Chapter Two "1927-37: Stump Creek, West Virginia"), furthermore, present an important aspect regarding Lightcap's state of mind: his level of seeming sanity and peace within both his own personal

psyche and the surrounding world. Whereas the book opens (Chapter One) with Lightcap in a state of disarray, chaos and collapse, Chapter Two begins with the scene of the protagonist's relatively tranquil, serene birth. Consider the following passages from Chapter Two, the first excerpt being that which opens the chapter, the second a passage from the following page:

Lorraine my mother lay in bed in the antique gothic farmhouse, in the little bedroom on the second floor where the child was conceived. She was breathing the fumes from an ether-soaked bandana held under her nose by Joe Lightcap her husband, while bald wrinkled Doc Winkoop pulled the baby gently, fairly easily, from the exit of the womb.

(42)

In frozen February the child lay snug in his mother's arms. Outside, beyond frost covered windows, the ice-shagged pines stood under the Appalachian moon, mute with suffering. Frost glittered on crusty waves

of snow that covered the pasture, the frozen
brook, the stubble of the cornfields. The
moonlight tinted the snow with the pale blue
tones of skim milk. Through the stillness
came the sound of an old oak cracking in the
woods, branch split by freezing sap. Then
came the wail of the iron locomotive on the
C&O line, burning coal as it chugged up
grade toward Trimble's crossing a mile away,
pulling fifty-five gondola cars of
bituminous coal to the coke ovens of
Morgantown and Wheeling and Pittsburgh. (43)

This is quite a shift from the chaotic in medias res
opening of the previous chapter. Here, Abbey evokes a
world far removed from the present one, practically
conjuring a setting worthy of a Currier & Ives painting.
The passages also present an atmosphere of tenderness and
love, a stark contrast to the shattered relationship that
opens the first chapter.

The tone of the even-numbered chapters remains
observational and somewhat detached, largely due to point
of view. Though point of view does shift throughout the

book regardless of the time period narrated, even-numbered chapters detailing Lightcap's past tend to utilize third person, except when Lightcap begins to personally relive a scene or occurrence: first person is employed when the narrative enters an ongoing occurrence or personal memory (regardless of surrounding time frame), third person when the text is relating the narrative as observation. Tense shift is similarly employed: present tense details those events presented as occurring in the present, regardless of the actual time period (i.e. "1947" or "1980"); past tense is a recollection or recounting of the past.

Abbey's employment of ever-shifting tense and point of view, hence, creates a sense of flux, a world befitting a person on the knowing brink of death: Lightcap lives, whether physically, psychically or spiritually, in all eras of his life if not simultaneously, then at will. In essence, over the "week or two" that the present-time sections of the novel ostensibly occupy, Lightcap is reliving his life, taking a fortnight to observe his life "flash before his eyes." This internally cognitive construction (specific to the protagonist) as rhetorical foundation for the novel brings to mind Lev Vygotsky's

theories of internal conversation: "[v]erbal thought is not an innate, natural form of behavior but is determined by a historical-cultural process that has specific properties that cannot be found in the natural forms of thought and speech" (51). Vygotsky sees internal conversation—that is, a conscious and often directed discussion with the self in which one actually forms thoughts as words consciously spoken within a purely internal, cognitive dimension—as not only being a result of cultural and social factors but also being shaped by and a reflection of cultural and social environment. Abbey utilizes internal conversation as a narrative approach in order to explore Lightcap's life from the beginning, and, more importantly, examine the question of who Lightcap is and how he became such; i.e. The Fool's Progress is an examination of the development of a character Abbey labeled as "arrogant, swaggering, macho, obnoxious and eccentric."

Chapter Two, which details the birth and first ten years of Lightcap's life, advances the notion of time flux. The second of four children, Lightcap is brought up within a poor Appalachian family. A descendant of both Northern

European and Native American Shawnee ancestry, Lightcap recalls both the beauty and poverty of his boyhood:

Inconsolable memories:

Pump and pump handle sheathed in ice on winter mornings; my first chore of the day, recalled Henry, was taking a hot kettle from the kitchen stove to thaw and prime that pump and fill the kitchen water buckets.

Herding in the milk cows on frosty mornings, I'd stand where the cows had lain to keep my bare feet warm.

With a green willow stick, whipping a crab apple halfway across the valley, I aimed at my big brother, Will, or at little brother, Paul, or at our baby sister, Marcie.

The smell of flowering dogwood in April.

Summer: heat lightning. Thunder above the hayfield. Fireflies and lightning bugs. The June Bug game. The leap from crossbeam into haymow twenty feet above the floor, high in the dusty air of the barn.

Dumping wood ashes into the two-hole privy
below the house—another of my childhood chores.

(44)

This is a passage of memories evidently presented with fondness: no complaint is spoken, regardless of the chores, inconveniences or hardships. Rather, a joy instead appears in the almost poetic recollection of duties, games, and habitat. Here, Abbey cements the protagonist's connection to and pleasure in the basic toil of life and family.

Again, it should be noted, many of these passages were originally written for the aforementioned unfinished, but significantly entitled novel The Good Life. In fact, when, in the opening of Chapter Twelve of The Fool's Progress Lightcap asks himself what he wants from life, he states "[t]he GOOD LIFE" (Abbey's capitalization) (245). These early childhood experiences serve as foundation for Lightcap's adult philosophies and approaches to the world he inhabits, especially in terms of his love for nature.

However, in keeping with the theme of reliving or tracing one's life (and the many separate incidents that construct it), note the rhetoric used to proffer the passage quoted above: started (or titled) as "Inconsolable

memories," the passage occurs in past tense, it being memory. Point of view reveals more: the passage begins in third person ("recalled Henry"), thus presenting the sequence as an observation, similar to the surrounding passages of the chapter; however, the memory quickly shifts into first person ("[h]erding in the milk cows on frosty mornings, I'd stand where the cows had lain to keep my bare feet warm"), signaling the reader that Lightcap is currently remembering this. When placed into the context of a chapter presented as occurring in 1927-1937, the revelation is not only startling but again revealing of Abbey's rhetorical construction: Lightcap is (once more) lost in a state of chronological flux—it is slowly becoming apparent that regardless of point of view, tense, or stated time period, the entire novel is occurring within the protagonist's mind as a series of memories, recollections and ruminations. Furthermore, on a larger or holistic scale, in light of the picaresque aspect of The Fool's Progress, such a state of flux suggests yet another level at work: the narrative reveals itself, like Lightcap's "broken-down bicameral mind" (as self-described on pages 13-14), in often opposing bits and pieces comprised of

scattered recollections and immediate confrontations, as well as an ever-shifting combination of each. This, then, is the picaresque approach taken to an extreme; that is, narrative structured around a series of loosely related events known to and experienced by only the protagonist.

Abbey employs still another rhetorical device to indicate that The Fool's Progress is actually a narrative internal to the protagonist-narrator: using or omitting quotation marks to indicate dialogue. The novel's prelude (also written, like the work's "postlude" in italics, thus suggesting both an emphasis of content as well as a level of removal or distance from the reader) begins with dialogue written without quotation marks. Immediately this creates an ethereal quality, as if the action is part of a dream; indeed, the passage is written in third person (and past tense), thereby leaving the identity of the narrator in question. When, however, dialogue first appears in the opening chapter (a telephone conversation between Lightcap and his neighbor), it is encased within quotation marks, adding both reality and immediacy to the scene (page 8). Subchapter II, however, opens with an extremely personal page-long conversation between Lightcap and Elaine

presented without quotation marks; as stated previously, this conversation is taking place within Lightcap's memory. The appearance or non-appearance of quotation marks, then, becomes key as indicator not only of a current or ongoing remembrance, but also of the level of personal meaning a conversation embodies.

Indeed, elimination or application of quotation marks to indicate internal/external conversation was employed by Abbey from the beginning of his literary career. In fact, he goes as far as to state the intent of this rhetorical move in the following passage from Jonathan Troy:

What's the matter with him?

Huh?

Who?

Him?

Him, for chrissake.

What?

What's the

Breaking through now, coming up, to the cool surface of consciousness; he frowned and rubbed his ears.

matter with him?"

"Jonathan?"

"Yes-what's the matter with him?"

"Jonathan!"

"Hey Jonathan!"

"Give him a drink."

"He's had one."

"Give him another one."

"Hey, Jonathan, what's wrong with you?"

"Take a slug of this."

"I'm all right. Let me alone."

(emphasis Abbey's) (50)

"Breaking through now, coming up, to the cool surface of consciousness" is a clear statement of Abbey's intentions: dialogue previous to this statement lacks quotation marks; dialogue following this passage employs quotation marks.

One of the clearest examples of the employment and importance of quotation marks (and their elimination) appears in Chapter Twenty. The longest chapter in the novel (eighty pages), Chapter Twenty is also one of the most dramatic and heartfelt. In terms of thematic content, it is similar to Black Sun (and in word count almost as long). Entitled "1971-77: Henry in Love-An Interlude,"

this chapter traces Lightcap's infatuation with, eventual marriage to and ultimate loss of a woman who appears to be his one "true love," a character named Claire. (Though, unlike Gatlin and Sandy's relationship, Lightcap and Claire produce a daughter [Elaine] who is then taken from Lightcap after Claire's death. This element becomes of great importance in the novel's Postlude.) Similar to Will Gatlin and Sandy in Black Sun, Lightcap and Claire come from different backgrounds and generations (the parallels with Abbey and his third wife Judy are again obvious) and are ultimately doomed in their relationship; like Sandy (and the real-life Judy), Claire ultimately dies, leaving Lightcap in a state of extreme despair, on the verge of an emotional breakdown. (Granted, in Black Sun Sandy does not actually die; however, her mysterious disappearance fulfills the same function in terms of plot.)

The relationship (which actually begins in Chapter Sixteen as a chance and abrupt meeting and departure) is initially recounted in past tense and a continuous shift between first and third person (indicative of Lightcap's nervous ongoing self-appraisal brought about by his being in the first stages of a relationship). Conversation is

consistently encased within quotation marks for the first seven pages of the chapter, representative of the fact that, at some point, these words were actually spoken, even if they are now being remembered as narrative. However, when Lightcap becomes flustered trying to explain his sudden, uninvited appearance at a concert in which Claire is participating as a violinist, quotation marks disappear, suggesting an inner conversation on the part of the protagonist, more a reflection of what he should have said rather than what he actually did say (note, also, the lack of paragraph breaks between each character's piece of the dialogue, creating a stream-of-consciousness flow):

They walked in silence for a while, under the trees, around and around in a meandering loop before the muted glow of the concert hall. Beyond, illuminated by hidden floodlights, the dome of the state capitol shone against the night sky.

You're wondering why I came here? Not at all, she said, not at all. How come you never answered my letters? I apologize; I didn't really think you were serious. Those others?

Other men write me letters. Do you think I'm serious now? Yes, right now I think you're serious. What does that mean? It means that I think you're serious right now. You're right. It's a now thing. What does that mean? What else could it mean, Henry? (363)

Even though many more conversations are recounted in this chapter, throughout the remaining seventy-three pages quotation marks do not again appear; the chapter becomes steadily more personal and introspective, leading up to Claire's death and Lightcap's following mental breakdown. The question of whether this is an accurate recollection of events (or if the events actually occurred at all) is thus again broached: narrator reliability once more becomes an issue.

Despite the obvious fluidity of time presented in the narrative of The Fool's Progress, throughout the book Abbey maintains the alternation of odd-numbered chapters as ostensibly in the present with even-numbered chapters as accounts of the past. The link between the two begins to fully emerge in Chapter Twenty-Four (aptly entitled "Judgment Day") in which Lightcap's present-time health

situation is revealed. The chapter is related entirely in the past tense and third person point of view. Completely an outsider, Lightcap revisits his death knell meeting with his doctor; he is still unable to reconcile himself with his (unavoidable) fate. This, then, sets the rhetorical stage for the work's final two chapters (Twenty-Five and Twenty-Six), in which Lightcap seemingly makes the transition from the world of the living to that of the ethereal or dead.

In Chapter Twenty-One, as Lightcap comes into sight of the Mississippi River, Abbey quotes an entry from William Clark's journal (from the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1804-06) expressing Clark's pleasure at arriving at the Pacific Ocean and thus the beginning of the end of his and Lewis' expedition: " 'Ocian [sic] in view. O, the joy!' A poor speller but a man of heart" (443). The title of Chapter Twenty-Five repeats the phrase: "Ocian in View." Here, Lightcap begins the final leg of his journey to his brother Will's farmhouse (in which Lightcap was born some fifty-three years earlier). Now extremely sick, Lightcap is on foot, having lost his truck to a flood; furthermore, his faithful canine companion Sollie is equally ill and

barely able to walk herself. ("Sollie," furthermore, is short for "Solstice," which means a "turning point" or "culmination," a life-stage both man and dog have reached.) Knowing that his physical appearance presents "a fearsome sight," Lightcap feels that he will be viewed "as a dangerous criminal" (487). After a run-in with a local sheriff (who nonetheless ultimately takes pity on Lightcap and gives him a sandwich), Lightcap decides to leave the highway and follow the railroad tracks. Having exhibited the qualities of a picaro from the novel's beginning, Lightcap now takes on the physical definitions in the fullest, twentieth-century manner: he is a bum (complete with bindle) walking the rail lines, homeless and seemingly forgotten. As the Spanish dictionary Tesoro de la lengua castellana (1st ed., 1611) describes a picaro, Lightcap is now wholly "a person of the lowest class, ragged and dirty."

Chapter Twenty-Five is divided into three subchapters. Following the established pattern as an odd-numbered chapter, Twenty-Five is told entirely in present tense and first person. Furthermore, all conversation is contained within quotation marks, until the chapter's last

subchapter. Hence, the chapter appears to take place exactly as written. The air of immediacy is profound. However, Subchapter III furthermore introduces an ethereal level that has previously been only hinted at throughout the novel. Subchapter II closes with Lightcap placing the near-dead Sollie inside his duffel bag to then be carried, musing that "maybe she'll suffocate in there, die quietly, quickly," a clear reflection on Lightcap's own desired fate. He continues to think, "[t]hen I'll dump her in the ditch for good. For eternity. Life is a dog and then you die? No no, life is a joyous dance through daffodils beneath cerulean blue skies. And then? Then what? I forget. I forget what happens next" (496). Lightcap recognizes death as an end of celebration; he is still, however, not ready to accept his fate.

Subchapter III opens with Lightcap dragging Sollie into an abandoned tarpaper shack beside a shutdown strip mine. There is "a chill in the wind suggesting [. . .] a snowstorm in April" (496). Though April is generally considered an early spring month (representative of new life), Lightcap feels winter instead, representative of death. He and Sollie curl up together inside the cabin,

attempting to ward off the cold of the coming night. Finally, under the influence of Demerol and Percodan, Lightcap falls asleep after first spotting and musing about the lights of a mysterious town across the creek. Though presented initially as a dream, the remainder of the chapter will ultimately become apparent as Lightcap's confrontation with death:

Late in the night I rise, free of all pain,
all melancholy, put on jacket and cap and
step outside, closing the door on my
comatose dog. A dark, starless night. Stick
in hand, revolver in my belt, I walk down
the muddy road to the tracks and the river,
cross over by a familiar iron truss bridge
and enter the town. (496-97)

This episode seems to begin as an actual occurrence; very quickly, however, strange happenings begin. First of these is how the previously unknown and unrecognizable town is now described as familiar: "I [. . .] cross over by a familiar iron truss bridge" (emphasis added). In the town, "[l]amps burn above an empty street paved in red brick, warm and mellow. Not a soul in sight. It must be very

late. There is no traffic nor any vehicles parked at the curb" (497). Continuing this odd, ethereal account (worthy of a Twilight Zone episode), Abbey-as-Lightcap next states, "[y]es, I know this street. I've seen these elm and maple trees before, those square frame houses painted white, these small shops close to the sidewalk." Noting a list of products displayed in the window of a beauty salon, Lightcap muses, "[n]othing new there. Same as before. I was amazed by those names when I was a boy" (497). Again, the notion of indeterminate, fluctuating time is suggested—Lightcap seems to be entering the town of his youth. He then views many more recognizable sights until he finally spots a lone car parked beside a pool hall. The vehicle is "a 1935 Hudson Terraplane with foxtail on the aerial and a classy necker's knob of red agate clamped to the steering wheel" (499). This is the car Lightcap's older brother Will drove as a teenager. Lightcap enters the poolhall and spies:

[N]obody there but Will and our little brother Paul shooting a game of eight ball. Paul chalks his stick; he looks pale and skinny as always but gives me a friendly smile. I nod; we watch Will

sink three in a row then miss an easy corner
shot. He straightens up, gives me a wink and
backs into the shadows. (499)

Lightcap then leaves the poolhall; his brother's car has now vanished. Up until this point, no dialogue has been spoken. However, Lightcap then observes his long-deceased father Joe "tramping home with his ax in his right hand, the limber shining crosscut saw over his left shoulder. He whistles a march tune. He laughs as I pass him, calling my name—Henry? that you Henry?—and keeps on whistling as he walks. I know as he fades behind me that I will not see him again" (499-500). Here, dialogue appears, but without quotation marks; it is a dialogue again inner to Lightcap. Where Lightcap is in terms of death is in question: unlike many common views of "heaven" as an ultimate destination in which souls gather and mingle, Lightcap realizes that he "will not see [his father] again." Where Lightcap is spiritually and/or metaphorically (and furthermore is headed) becomes an enigma. As he next attempts to reach his own house, Lightcap is instead confronted by an unknown, ominous entity:

Something huge, black, grasping, looming above the trees, blotting out the few dim stars, shambles toward me from the forest. Watching that shadow come I feel gathering within me the power of an ancient rage, the strength of a never-forgiving hate. I draw the gun from my belt, tighten my grip on my stick and advance with joy, in an ecstasy of anger, to meet the shapeless thing as it reaches forth to embrace me.

Henry, it says, Henry my friend my very best friend, where have you been? I've been looking for you everywhere (500)

Near the end of Chapter Twenty, grief-stricken after having lost Claire to death, Lightcap stands "again alone, far out on the rim of some awful desolation of forest or desert with a red sun descending in a blood-soaked carnage of clouds toward the apocalypse of night." He then "howl[s] at the sky:"

You up there--God.

This is me, Henry.

Henry Holyoak Fucking Lightcap the First.

And I challenge you, oh God—

J'appelle de ta riguer—

Speak to me or strike me dead!

He waited. (No clear reply.) You die then!

He [Lightcap] bellowed, and swung [an axe] from high above his shoulders—while thunder rumbled—slashing down with all his strength, cleaving the aspen billet in two with a single mighty blow.

(435-36)

Lightcap is evidently at war with himself as both a physical and spiritual entity; more importantly, however (and possibly as an extension of his own spiritual self), he is at war with the elements, that which he sees as existence itself. Clearly he is not the first to offer up such a challenge. However, Lightcap is ultimately challenging himself; he both loves and hates himself as representative of all humanity, of all existence. Indeed the theme of dualism is here punctuated by the closing passage: Lightcap himself splits the representative log in two, a confirmation that he views the world as a dichotomous—and often unfair—realm. Furthermore, as he nears death at the close of Chapter Twenty-Five, Lightcap

has still not accepted his fate, instead confronting the "huge, black, grasping, looming" entity which represents some greater power with "joy, in an ecstasy of anger." This is evidence of the ambivalence Lightcap has exhibited throughout the novel, that is, not only the inability to make a choice, but even more importantly, as psychological definition, the coexistence of intense and controlling positive and negative feelings towards the same entity (Chaplin 23).

Chapter Twenty-Five ends with "Death's" ominous statement, "I've been looking for you everywhere" (500) This is the last time (excepting the novel's postlude) in which the reader hears from Lightcap in the first person; the chapter, following pattern, occurs in present tense and first person. At this point, however, an interesting shift occurs in the novel's narrative pattern. Chapter Twenty-Six, unlike previous even-numbered chapters, appears to relate not a past episode, but rather a present event; that is, the events detailed are sequential to the previous chapter's narrative. Hence, if this chapter is indeed breaking pattern and telling a present-time episode, it should therefore appear primarily in first person and

present tense; such is not the case. Chapter Twenty-Six, an even-numbered chapter is set in the present, yet it is told in past tense and third person. This broaches the question, then, of where in time the narrator is writing from; Lightcap's final minutes (hours?) are viewed in a third person account as having already occurred.

Chapter Twenty-Six opens with the passage "[h]e walked the railway mile by mile [. . .]" (501). Note the usage of the third person "he." Shortly thereafter, the protagonist is referred to as "the man." In fact, Lightcap is not referred to by name anywhere in the first four pages of the chapter; instead, in this closing chapter, Abbey's autobiographical protagonist becomes the Everyman, representative of all humanity. In so doing, Abbey points out that Lightcap is indeed human, as flawed as anybody else—he truly has "feet of clay." This, interestingly, is also how Don Quixote ends, a work to which Abbey has repeatedly drawn rhetorical connection throughout The Fool's Progress. Confronted with death, Quixote states: "Let us go gently, gentlemen," [. . .] "for there are no birds this year in last year's nests. I was mad, but I am sane now. I was Don Quixote de la Mancha, but to-day, as I

have said, I am Alonso Quixano the Good. May my sincere repentance restore your former esteem for me" (938). Shortly thereafter, Cervantes rhetorically steps back from his protagonist writing, "[s]uch was the end of the Ingenious Gentleman of La Mancha [. . .]" (939); Abbey's closing chapter is written in a similarly removed manner. While Cervantes obviously can't speak for Abbey (or Lightcap), the parallels are clear: death equalizes and removes all. Clearly, both Cervantes and Abbey (each of whom wrote the close of his work facing his own imminent demise) recognized death's realities. As The Fool's Progress is written so as to have taken place primarily within the protagonist's mind, it appears that in this final chapter Lightcap has arrived at the threshold of death and halted; such a rhetorical aspect returns to Ann Ronald's comment regarding Black Sun as "emotionally frozen chapters of living death" (157). Lightcap, possibly mirroring Abbey, has experienced a state of emotional paralysis during this final stage of his life—he stands on the brink, waiting for the final step, caught whether he likes it or not in a state of momentary but significant ambivalence.

Entitled "Coming Home," Chapter Twenty-Six tells the last day of Lightcap's return to his boyhood home. As the chapter draws to its conclusion, Lightcap stops atop a hill in the forest overlooking brother Will's old family farmhouse. Sollie, initially seeming to have died, instead crawls out of the duffel bag she has inhabited throughout most of the final leg of the journey. Like Lightcap, she is now barely able to sit up, let alone stand. She crawls next to Lightcap who is watching people--mostly family members--gather at the house below for a celebration unknown to him. Lightcap decides that rather than join the vibrant and alive group, he will instead go away so as not to bring his own specter of death to others. However, as Lightcap prepares to leave, brother Will abruptly and surprisingly appears from among the trees nearby:

The two men stared at each other for a long moment before the older one spoke: "Okay, Henry, enough fooling around. We been expecting you for weeks. For years. Come on down to the house now. Supper's almost ready."

Henry felt a great bewildering joy rising in his heart: fifty-three years--

maybe that was enough after all. But what he said was, "I don't think I can stay, Will."

The other cast his cigar into the damp leaves. "Nobody said you had to stay, you damn fool." Will stepped toward him, broad smile on his face, holding out his right hand. "And nobody ever said you had to leave neither."

(509)

The chapter thus closes, leaving Henry Lightcap disoriented but welcomed at the threshold of oblivion. The book then ends with a short (three page) postlude, written in future tense (the only time such tense appears in the work) in which Henry, his daughter Ellie at his side, imagines himself madly driving a car through the desert, omnipotent in the face of death:

Roaring westward at evening, top down, red
sun of Texas burning in their eyes [. . .]
Welcome to the West! he'll shout in the
wind, grinning his vulpine grin, teeth
hanging out, and hug her tighter to his
side, his gaunt ribs, his beating swelling

joyous heart. By God we're gonna get there,
Ellsworth, we're a-gonna make it yet, I tell
you, there's no way they can stop us now.

(511)

The line "roaring westward at evening" contains one of the novel's primary underlying themes: humanity's non-acceptance of the inevitability of death, the determination to continue in light of a perceived unfair situation. Indeed, whereas the novel's Prelude outlined Lightcap's first realization of life, the Postlude relates the protagonist's coming to grips with death; the Postlude is, in fact, Lightcap's death. The fact that the Postlude is also related in third person underscores the sense of removal. Hence, Abbey concludes his book with a comment on the unfair reality of death while also proclaiming his joy for and love of life. The Fool's Progress was written by a man attempting to come to grips with his own death.

At the close of Don Quixote the title character states, "[m]ay my sincere repentance restore your former esteem for me"; as stated in Abbey's journals, Lightcap "learns some humility in the end. Good for him." If, indeed, Lightcap-intimating Abbey-has, like Quixote,

learned "some humility," this then begs the following question: humility at what cost?

A review of The Fool's Progress in The St. Louis Post-Dispatch proclaims:

If you've ever looked in the rearview mirror of your trim Japanese import and seen a wild-eyed man barreling down on you in his big, battered American pickup, its hood held shut with wire, a toy bald eagle swinging by its feet from the antenna, a water bag hanging askew from the twisted grill, the gunrack filled to capacity--and if you ever felt a shiver of fear and fascination and wondered what the wild-eyed man was thinking then read this book. (qtd. in Bishop 161-62)

Lightcap, increasingly disoriented and disturbed throughout The Fool's Progress, indeed presents a visage of one to be questioned, feared, and at times detested. However, as the St. Louis Post-Dispatch article intimates, the appearance is only part of the story; the entity behind that appearance may not always be what the appearance suggests--life is indeed filled with duality. Due to the novel's rhetorical design, structure and implementation, Abbey has

succeeded in presenting a character who comprehends the dualism and ambivalence so prevalent to the human condition, a character thus torn—and controlled—by the conflicting emotions by which he is also driven.

The dustjacket for the first edition of The Fool's Progress features the fool from what is listed as the "classic Tarot card deck." Shown with a walking stick in one hand and the medieval equivalent of a hobo's bindle draped over his shoulder, this portraiture is said to be Dionysius, the springtime god who represented creative power in terms of wonder and anticipation rather than fear. The symbol also "personifies the universal principle associated with the state of consciousness experienced by people prior to birth and after death" (Bishop 166). As Lightcap is on his final living journey he, like the Fool of the Tarot, therefore attempts to leave fear behind and bravely reconcile himself with death. When, however, he is actually confronted by death at the close of the novel, Lightcap initially hesitates and stalls, only, in the Postlude, to assume the same state found in the work's Prelude: what Bishop refers to as "the state of

consciousness experienced by people prior to birth and after death."

However, the symbol of the fool, in yet another dualism, serves a second rhetorical purpose. The fool has long been portrayed in literature as one who can alone speak the "truth" when all others are afraid to do so. Shakespeare's fool in King Lear, for example, is perhaps one of the best known characters of such function. Lear's fool is alone able to speak what others think, believe and fear; furthermore, by the play's fourth act, the fool disappears as a character, having become one as an entity with Lear. In this, a parallel can be drawn between Abbey's "fool" (Lightcap) and Abbey himself: Lightcap says what Abbey thinks, believes and fears.

Abbey's self-proclaimed "mission" to "wake up people" appears at the root of The Fool's Progress; he created his work and protagonist as a way, for better or worse, to goad people out of their complacency. In conceiving a picaro who can speak what Abbey considers "the truth," he has taken his "mission" to new, questionable levels clearly designed to create controversy. Furthermore, the presentation of disorientation as rhetorical tool forces

the reader to question not only her or his beliefs, but the text itself as well; this is disorientation created to generate disorientation. Hence, the question of rhetorical success becomes paramount: does The Fool's Progress raise its readers' consciousness or merely repel and disgust? If the latter, does the novel then ultimately discredit its author and his other works? Or, put another way, is The Fool's Progress therefore as proclaimed "An Honest Novel" that forces its readers to reassess both their beliefs and themselves or, sadly, merely an exemplification of an authorial fool's progress?

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

SIR SAMP: Has he not a rogue's face?

Speak, brother, you understand

physiognomy; a hanging look to me.

He has a damn'd Tyburn-face, without
the benefit o' the clergy.

FORE: Hum-truly I don't care to
discourage a young man. He has a
violent death in his face; but I
hope, no danger of hanging.

-From William Congreve's Love For Love
(1698)

-quoted as preface in The Fool's Progress

The separation between ideology and rhetoric is often obscure. Indeed, one frequently relies on the other. The ability to present ideas, philosophies, social commentary, decrees and related statements of belief and/or admonition has long been reliant as much on the messenger as the message. As stated by Socrates in Plato's Phaedrus, "Must not the art of rhetoric, taken as a whole, be a kind of

influencing of the mind by means of words?" (123; 261A)

Here, the power of rhetoric to shape a message and, hence, possibly to shape a listener's mind, is broached. The inherent necessity of the intertwining of persuasion and presentation as part of a greater rhetorical parcel becomes evident. However, Aristotle, in The Rhetoric states, "speakers themselves are made trustworthy by three things [. . .] which make us believe. These are, intelligence, virtue and good-will" (150; bk. 2, ch. 1, sec. 5). In this, Aristotle is building his argument for the qualities that create Ethos within a speaker, that quality which creates and/or establishes a sense of credibility and believability within a speaker as judged by her or his audience. Furthermore, Ethos is also often closely connected to Pathos, the ability on the part of a speaker to recognize an audience's inclination and predisposition and appeal to those beliefs. Indeed, Aristotle speaks of "friendship and hatred," qualities which help constitute Pathos, as a commonly integral ingredient of Ethos; one often relies on the other. A third important aspect of argument is Logos, that aspect which appeals to reasoning and rational conclusion thus derived: "[t]he use of all

persuasive speech has a view to a decision [. . .]
[hence,] since we have defined the available means of
making speeches ethical[,] it remains for us to discuss the
general appliances [. . .] [For example,] to show either
that a thing will be, or that it has been" (Aristotle 154-
55; bk. 2, ch. 18, sec. 1-2). Again, this aspect is part
of a larger parcel, and therefore related in terms of a
speech's (or work's) effectiveness. "Friendship and
hatred," that is whether a person is inclined or
disinclined to a particular argument or philosophy, hence
plays an important role in conveying that argument or
philosophy. When no positive inclination previously
exists, establishing such a rapport or "good will" with
one's reader or listener is therefore paramount for a
writer or speech-giver.

Edward Abbey clearly wanted, as Socrates put it, to
"influence [. . .] minds by means of words." To do this
a speaker (or writer), according to Aristotle, must create
a level of trust between him or herself and his or her
audience in order for that audience to believe and accept
the speech-giver's words. Granted, many of Abbey's
readers, influenced by a favorable predisposition created

by reading his earlier works (myself included) approached The Fool's Progress with a primarily positive inclination; a rapport had already been established. However, the rhetoric contained within The Fool's Progress quickly created consternation and alienation among many readers (myself included). Abbey's approach to Ethos, Pathos and Logos appears puzzling at the least; indeed he seems to consciously defy the basic principles of speech-giving and, hence, the influencing of minds.

Abbey's manipulation and, at times, outright defiance of Aristotle's dicta as rhetorical tool to provoke readers into questioning standards and beliefs, however, is evident even in his earliest works. Anarchy, as an approach to both self and social government is apparent in the philosophies of the title character in Jonathan Troy; indeed, it is a basic theme of The Brave Cowboy, The Monkey Wrench Gang and Good News. Abbey always wanted reaction and in The Fool's Progress he most certainly got it; he was, nonetheless, as perplexed by the type of reaction as many of his readers were by his novel's rhetoric. His journal entries from the time reflect his incomprehension of the many negative and even personally hostile reviews

The Fool's Progress generated. Referring to the review by Ed Marston (cited earlier in this thesis), Abbey wrote:

He devotes ninety percent of his review to attacking the author's "racism," "sexism," etc., says nothing about the actual content of the book until the final brief paragraph. Never thought I'd be attacked in the National Review from the point of view of the most standard, doctrinaire, conventional chickenshit liberalism—but this is it. Exactly the kind of cant and sham and hypocrisy, intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice, that has turned me finally against "liberalism" in general.

* * *

Ives [Charles, American composer] to copyist: "Do not correct my wrong notes. The wrong notes are right."

Ives to critic: "Don't worry too much about the wrong notes. You'll miss the music."

(emphasis Abbey's) (Confessions of a Barbarian 351)

Like most picares of fiction, Abbey, by the time he wrote this passage, had gone through some level of personal and philosophical change in that he states that "cant and sham and hypocrisy, intellectual dishonesty and moral cowardice [. . .] has turned me finally against 'liberalism' in general." Yet, at about the same time, he also stated, "I'm neither a good liberal nor a good conservative [. . .] I take great pride, in fact, in being attacked by both ends of the political spectrum" (qtd. in Bishop 11). Abbey's personal philosophies centered on contradiction; he consciously crafted his rhetoric in similar manner.

In reference to The Fool's Progress, however, the most interesting part of the above passage is the latter part in terms of its juxtaposition with the former. Abbey was a great fan of early-twentieth century composer Charles Edward Ives. Ives, an extremely controversial musical composer in his time (indeed he was, for a long period of time, more respected for various monographs he wrote on the insurance business than for his musical compositions), was roundly criticized for his "wrong notes" (Rossiter xi-xiii, 114-120). In relating Ives' comments that "the wrong notes are right" and "don't worry about the wrong notes[-]you'll

miss the music," to his own works, Abbey shows his bewilderment and frustration at being, he felt, misunderstood. Many readers simply didn't understand what Abbey believed was the point of The Fool's Progress; Abbey meant for the rhetoric contained in his text not to create division, but rather to create question. In this, the work is in fact a return to Abbey's long-held and stated belief and theme that humanity, as one part of the greater parcel of all existence, should be questioned. Or, as he had put it some years before, humanity should call into question its apparent drive for "growth for the sake of growth [which] is the ideology of the cancer cell."

In a 1983 entry to his journal, Abbey wrote, "[o]nly the rich and powerful benefit from race conflict. They encourage it. They set the poor against one another, the lower class against the middle class, whites against blacks against browns against reds" (Confessions of a Barbarian 307). About a year before his death and shortly after finishing The Fool's Progress, he continued:

Am I a racist?

I cannot imagine any standard (intelligence, military power, morality, cultural achievement,

athletic ability, musical ability, appearance) by which all members of any particular race can be adjudged innately inherently intrinsically superior to all members of some other particular race. My notion of a superior race, if such a thing were plausible, would be harmlessness: which group has done the least harm to the earth, to other forms of life, to other humans, to each other.

[. . .]

In our weird taboo-ridden cult-obsessed hypersensitive creed-crazed culture, anyone who attempts to examine tough social questions in a logical, analytic, empiric manner, must learn to expect a blizzard of rhetorical abuse from all sides.

[. . .]

The one thing both conservatives and liberals, Left and Right wingers, hate, is a free-thinker, a nonconformist. From either side. Unless you subscribe in every detail to one

doctrine or the other, you will be denounced.

Look at me. (emphasis Abbey's) (336-37)

Key within this passage is the statement, "[m]y notion of a superior race, if such a thing were plausible, would be harmlessness: which group has done the least harm to the earth, to other forms of life, to other humans, to each other." This contains Abbey's basic philosophy: the only "superior" human is she or he who lives in harmony, rather than conflict, with the environment. The fact that Abbey feels the victim of "rhetorical abuse from all sides" further emphasizes his feelings of being misunderstood regarding his philosophies as presented in The Fool's Progress. The second paragraph, however ("In our weird taboo-ridden cult-obsessed hypersensitive creed-crazed culture . . ."), exhibits Abbey's apparent inability to comprehend a most basic facet of his fellow human beings: other humans also have beliefs and philosophies, whether constructed on logical or emotional grounds. As Luis Alberto Urrea put it after being shocked by Abbey's rhetoric in "Immigration and Liberal Taboos," "sometimes he hurts us [. . .] Edward Abbey once stuck a knife in my heart" (43). While this may initially sound trite, it is

anything but: as Abbey felt a victim of the "rhetorical abuse" of others, others equally or even more so felt (and continue to feel) a victim of his own rhetorical abuse.

Abbey's 1983 journal entry, mentioned previously in this thesis, seems to sum up his dichotomous nature, his ambivalent approach to humanity: "I am accused of being a hater. What those two-bit reviewers cannot see is that every hate implies a corresponding love" (Confessions of a Barbarian 310). This, then returns to my initial point: Abbey viewed the world in a dualistic state, the psychological activity or condition known as ambivalence. He viewed humanity in terms of the good and the bad, with the acknowledgment that both characteristics and dispositions generally occur, to some extent, in everyone; he furthermore used this philosophy as basis for his approach to the human condition and its relation to the world in which humanity exists.

Had I picked up The Fool's Progress without having ever before read Abbey, I would have likely never read past the first chapter or even first subchapter. The novel's rhetoric is, without question, often repulsive, ugly, and offensive; nonetheless, (when entered into in its entirety)

it is also, as The New York Times Book Review put it, "sometimes beautiful." Ultimately, Abbey's rhetoric, especially in this work, does achieve his stated goal: it is outrageous and provocative, and, hence, "wakes the reader up." The rhetoric is designed to create reaction. The book is the autobiographical tale of a self-destructive and dying man contemplating what he sees as a self-destructive and dying human condition. Whether or not it is, as the subtitle states, "An Honest Novel," is up to the reader to decide; in a journal entry made when Abbey was near the completion of the book, he wrote, "The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel. Honest? Well, that's a teaser, a come-on, a secret between me and the reader" (Confessions of a Barbarian 333). Abbey evidently wants the reader to decide for her or himself what is "honest" within the work and its protagonist's odyssey; at the same time he wants the reader to similarly question his or her own personal odyssey.

Lightcap refers to his truck as his "Rosinante," his vehicle on which he, like Don Quixote, is able to ride through his adventures, both physically and metaphorically. At one point in the text, Lightcap describes the truck: "A

1962 Dodge Carryall, a panel truck, solid, ugly, honest[-
]my Dodge Superheap" (65). That this description stands as
a metaphor for the deteriorating but philosophically
"honest" Lightcap and his perceived deteriorating but
philosophically dishonest world is evident in Abbey's text;
that it also symbolizes The Fool's Progress: An Honest
Novel and its author appears to be irony, intended or
otherwise. Physiognomy, the archaic "science" in which it
was believed that one's physical looks could tell something
of his or her mental characteristics was and is indeed an
ingredient of intolerance. Abbey's intolerance, however,
was for no one in particular but everyone together, as
totality, as part of the whole of humanity. The fact that
he couldn't truly understand or comprehend the offensive
nature of his rhetorical approach, however, was apparently
largely lost on him. "He has a violent death in his face;
but I hope, no danger of hanging"; if Abbey is in danger of
a metaphorical hanging, it will be of his own rhetorical
doing.

As Bakhtin reminds us, "the living utterance
[. . .] cannot fail to brush up against thousands of
living dialogic threads [;] [. . .] it cannot fail to

become an active participant in social dialogue." Abbey's novel is ultimately meant as a call for humanity to examine its relationship to the world in-and on-which it exists. Whether or not Abbey's proffered utterance is accepted into the dialogic and social consciousness of his readers depends to a great extent upon the rhetoric Abbey has used and its resultant effects on any given audience. Ed Marston denounced Abbey's rhetoric in The Fool's Progress as being that of a "furious, overeducated hillbilly"; E. A. Mares hailed the same book as "one of the four greatest picaresque works [ever] written; Lisa Miller observed that, "[t]his is no ho-hum novel. Readers will cherish it or burn it, but they're not going to leave it out in the rain." Clearly, the novel is, if nothing else, a work that creates controversy and demands reaction, responses that are paramount within Abbey's primarily stated objectives for his rhetoric: to be discussed, to generate debate, and to cause the reader to enter into a state of question both social and personal. Aristotle declared, "[t]he use of all persuasive speech has a view to a decision"; whether or not one accepts Abbey's argument, his rhetorical presentation nonetheless compels, even forces, the reader to react or

take a stance. Hence, Abbey's rhetoric, though often offensive, is ultimately successful. In the final analysis, The Fool's Progress is, as its paperback cover states, "A hilarious and disturbing tale[.] [It is] vintage Abbey."

WORKS CITED

- Abbey, Edward. Black Sun. New York: Avon, 1971.
- . The Brave Cowboy: An Old Tale in a New Time.
New York: Dodd, Mead: 1956.
- . Confessions of a Barbarian: Selections from the
Journals of Edward Abbey, 1951-1989. Ed. David
Peterson. Boston: Little, Brown, 1994.
- . Desert Solitaire. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
- . Fire on the Mountain. Albuquerque: New Mexico
UP, 1962.
- . The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel. New York:
Henry Holt, 1988.
- . Hayduke Lives! Boston: Little Brown, 1990.
- . Jonathan Troy. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1954.
- . The Journey Home. New York: Plume, 1977.
- . The Monkey Wrench Gang. New York: Avon, 1975.
- . One Life at a Time, Please. New York: Henry
Holt, 1988.
- Alter, Robert. Rogue's Progress: Studies in the
Picaresque Novel. Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1964.

- Aristotle. "The Rhetoric." Readings in Classical Rhetoric. Ed. Thomas W. Benson and Michael H. Prosser. Davis: Hermagoras Press, 1988. 149-70.
- Bakhtin, M. M. The Dialogic Imagination. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: Texas UP, 1981.
- . "Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff." Speech Genres and Other Late Essays. Trans. Bern W. McGee. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas UP, 1986.
- Bishop, James. Epitaph for a Desert Anarchist: The Life and Legacy of Edward Abbey. New York: Atheneum, 1994.
- Cahalan, James M. " 'My People': Edward Abbey's Appalachian Roots in Indiana County, Pennsylvania, Part I, Section 2: Abbey's Early Life." Pittsburgh History 79.3 (1996): 92-107.
- Cervantes, Miguel de. The Adventures of Don Quixote. London: Penguin, 1950.
- Chaplin, James P. Dictionary of Psychology. New York: Dell, 1975.

- Coale, Howard. "Beer, Guns and Nietzsche." Rev. of
The Fool's Progress, by Edward Abbey. New York
Times Book Review 18 Dec. 1988: 22.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. Black Feminist Thought. 2nd ed.
New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Del Monte, Alberto. L'Itinerario del romanzo
picaresco spagnolo. Firenze: Sansoni, 1957.
- DeMorelos, Leonardo C. Introduction. The Life of
Lazarillo de Tormes His Fortunes and Adversities.
Trans. By W.S. Merwin. New York: Anchor, 1962.
11-33.
- Duran, Manuel. Cervantes. Boston: Twayne, 1974.
- Haan, Fonger de. An Outline of the History of the
Novela Picaresca in Spain. The Hague-New York:
Martinus Nijhoff, 1903.
- Henderson, David W. Rev. of The Fool's Progress: An
Honest Novel, by Edward Abbey. The Library
Journal. 1 Nov. 1988: 105.
- Henriksen, Margot A. Dr. Strangelove's America:
Society and Culture in the Atomic Age. Berkeley:
California UP, 1997.

Hepworth, James R. "The Poetry Center Interview."

Resist Much, Obey Little: Remembering Ed Abbey.

Ed. James R. Hepworth and Gregory McNamee. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1996. 48-60.

Horsley, David. "We Need More Irascibles Like Edward Abbey." Amarillo Globe-News. (1998). 17 Oct. 1998 <http://amarillonet.com/stories/081798/opi_abbey.shtml>

The Life of Lazarillo de Tormes His Fortunes and Adversities. Trans. W.S. Merwin. New York: Anchor, 1962.

Luft, Kerry. "Unsung Rascal's Tour de Force." Rev. of The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel, by Edward Abbey. The Chicago Tribune 29 Nov. 1988: Tempo 3.

Mares, E.A. Review of The Fool's Progress, by Edward Abbey. Santa Fe Reporter 23-29 November 1988: 27.

Marston, Ed. "Appalachian Man." Rev. of The Fool's Progress: An Honest Novel, by Edward Abbey. National Review 10 Feb. 1989: 60-62.

Miller, Stuart. The Picaresque Novel. Cleveland: Case Western Reserve UP, 1967.

- Plato. Phaedrus. Trans. R. Hackforth. Cambridge:
Cambridge UP, 1952.
- Ronald, Ann. The New West of Edward Abbey. 2nd ed.
Reno: Nevada UP, 2000.
- Rossiter, Frank R. Charles Ives and His America. New
York: Liveright, 1975.
- Sedwick, Henry Dwight. A Short History of Spain.
Boston: Little, Brown, 1925.
- Skow, John. "Sick-Dog Blues." Rev. of The Fool's
Progress: An Honest Novel, by Edward Abbey. Time
28 Nov. 1988: 98.
- Slovic, Scott. Seeking Awareness in American Nature
Writing: Henry Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Edward
Abbey, Wendell Berry, Barry Lopez. Salt Lake:
Utah UP, 1992.
- Urrea, Luis Alberto. "Down the Highway with Edward
Abbey." Resist Much Obey Little: Remembering Ed
Abbey. Eds. James R. Hepworth and Gregory
McNamee. San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1996. 40-47.
- Vygotsky, Lev. Thought and Language. Trans. Eugenia
Hanfmann and Gertrude Vakar. Cambridge: MIT
Press, 1962.