

Ecoactivist Performance

The Environment As Partner in Protest?

Baz Kershaw

1.

Ecoactivist protest in the final decades of the 20th century, in common with most other kinds of protest, increasingly was shaped by overt performative tactics. Part of protest's purpose in turning to performance was, of course, to gain high-profile media space: resistant representations to raise general ecological awareness. But also there was for some ecoactivists a more radical agenda, one that was based on the awareness of the contradictions involved in such dangerous dancing with the prime agents of cultural commodification—the press, TV, film and so on (see Schechner 1993:45–93; Kershaw 1999:89–125). John Jordan, for example, a leading figure in the UK's so-called DiY (do it yourself) protest movement,¹ draws on Guy Debord when he argues that:

Art has clearly failed historically as a means to bring imagination and creativity to movements of social change. [...] What makes DiY protest so powerful is that it “clearly embodies a rejection of the specialised sphere of old politics, as well as of art and everyday life” [Debord]. Its insistence on creativity and yet the invisibility of art and artists in its midst singles it out as an historical turning point in the current of creative resistance. By making the art completely invisible, DiY protest gives art back its original socially transformative power [...] (Jordan in McKay 1998:131; Debord 1977:Thesis 155)

This claim may seem contradictory in the context of performances designed to hit the headlines, so Jordan also quotes Jean Dubuffet to clarify his point: “Art [...] loves to be incognito; its best moments are when it forgets what it is called” (131). This shifts the contradiction into the much more interesting area of paradox, for the flip side of this forgetfulness, so to speak, is about an art that does not declare its name, about the way that art lies in concealing art. In other words, Jordan is suggesting that the power of the art of performance is greatest when you do not know you are seeing it.²

In this article I use the attempt to produce such “invisible art” in two ecoactivist protests to explore the tricky territory in which art and environment, perfor-

mance and ecology, might successfully meet in resistance to a global progress that is killing us all. I work more by association than by argument in an effort to sneak up on perspectives on the ecologies of performance that threaten to cloud over as soon as you try to describe them. For trying to talk intelligibly about the ecologies of performance is, to adapt a phrase from Alan Watts (in Hughes and Brecht 1978:61), a bit like trying to bite your own teeth: the moment you think you've done it you haven't.

2.

I am writing, therefore, in a paradoxical landscape. It is paradoxical, firstly, because any attempt to comprehend “nature” from within “culture” is similar to thinking you can turn on a light quickly enough to see what the dark looks like. Simply by using the word “landscape” I am casting a shadow over “nature.” Secondly, it is paradoxical because even as ecoactivist protest became more performative it tried to make performance transparent, so that only the “issue,” the “point,” of the protest is seen. Thirdly, it is paradoxical because ecological activism itself is almost inevitably riddled with paradox:

To stop a logging company from destroying the old-growth forest on Mare's Island, British Columbia, the local Indian nation drove 400,000 steel spikes into the trees they wanted to save: You have to damage nature in order to save it.

To stop the road builders at Fairmile, East Devon, protesters burrowed into the ground, dug holes in the floor of their tunnels, poured concrete into the holes, set iron loops in the concrete, and chained themselves to the loops: You have to use the technologies of progress to attack its effects.

To stop toxic waste from a chemical plant from poisoning the coastline for miles around Lavalette, New Jersey, Greenpeace plugged the plant's underwater outlet pipe, causing a higher concentration of pollution on the site, which will take hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years to clear: You have to make things worse to make them better.

These contradictions and/or paradoxes are generated because to take cultural action for an ecological cause is always to risk recreating the pathology—endemic denigration of the “natural world”—that it is trying to eliminate. This will be the case so long as “culture” and “nature” are conceived in opposition to each other, as they are in the dominant ideologies of the so-called developed world.

3.

I am dwelling in paradox because, as I have argued before, any effort to “create discourse about an ecology of performance will be enmeshed in paradox” (2000:122). Put crudely: How can we write about the natural world (whatever that is?)—and the relationship of performance to it—when the “natural world,” being a cultural construct, makes nature more inaccessible? Moreover, this type of problem is massively compounded by David Harvey's argument that, if “socio-political projects are ecological projects, then some conception of ‘nature’ and ‘environment’ are omnipresent in everything we do” (1996:174). Hence, “Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than socio-political arguments are ecologically neutral” (182). If we accept this argument, it follows that all performances, one way or another, are articulated to ecological concerns, whether we acknowledge that or not.

This makes the performances of ecoactivists especially interesting because, in attempting to make their qualities as performance invisible, they expose the paradoxes involved in using the tools—in this case the dramaturgical tools—to dis-

mantle the tools themselves. In the process their performative actions may be seen to animate attitudes toward “nature”—such as treating it as “landscape”—that they deplore in their other discourses, such as public statements to the press. In this respect their protests are especially marked by a key general characteristic of performance, in that they perform far more than they mean to (Burbank 2001).

I am interested in the contradictions that result from this plenitude in performance not as a route into a critique of ecoactivist protest, but as a way of thinking through to an ecology of performance that will make its inevitable paradoxes productive in the struggle for environmental sanity. So while I am full of admiration for the achievements of ecoactivists, I think also that most of the actions they have mounted—despite huge successes—have been in some crucial respects counterproductive. This can be seen most clearly by focusing on what, according to Jordan, they prefer to make invisible: the art in the event, and especially the dramaturgy of their protest performances.

But there are huge methodological problems in such an undertaking because the usual approaches to performance analysis, from the perspective of potential ecologies of performance, also almost inevitably reproduce the pathologies they should be trying to avoid. The act of seeing performance as a cultural product tends to transform nature into a resource to be exploited in the making of performance. Scholars and theorists of performance, in searching for ecologies of performance, therefore need to be wary of the usual strategies of analysis. New tropes for thinking have to be invented. Hence, my trope for analyzing Western theatre from an ecological point of view has been Biosphere 2, the huge glass hangar in the southern Arizona desert that aims to replicate the earth’s ecosystem. The contemporary theatre is a very close cousin of Bio 2, in that it seems to be culturally transparent—holding a mirror up to ‘nature,’ say—yet it has become hermetically sealed off from the “natural world” (see Kershaw 2000). In this article I want to make a similar methodological move by looking at ecoactivist performance through the trope of the black holes of space.

4.

Everyone has heard of black holes. They are one of the 20th century’s greatest inventions because they captured the imagination and inspired a way of thinking that literally, figuratively, and radically changed the world: Einstein’s general theory of relativity. This theory installed paradox at the heart of science and the material—and immaterial—universe: Things can be in two places at once. We can meet ourselves coming in the opposite direction. Light is both a wave and a particle.

Black holes represent a spectacular example of the paradoxes of relativity. In theory they produce singularities: a dimensionless object of infinite density. As you approach the event horizon, the point of no return, of a black hole—the radius of which can be pretty precisely calculated by astronomical standards—the effects of gravitation severely modify time and space: time slows down relative to that of distant observers and completely stops on the horizon itself.

Astronomers believe they have discovered black holes in a binary star system called Cygnus X-1, in the Large Magellanic Cloud in a galaxy neighboring our own, and in the constellation Monoceros. Astrophysicists have conjectured that many substantial galaxies may contain black holes at their centers. Cosmologists—Stephen Hawking among them—have suggested that black holes may be connected to each other by “wormholes,” passages through space-time that, theoretically, would allow time travel. Go into a wormhole and you might instantly find yourself in another time and place—another universe even—where the wormhole emerges in another black hole. Black holes and their potential wormholes are my trope for addressing the complexities of a performative analysis of ecoactivist protest (National Centre for Supercomputing 1995).

5.

In what ways might contemporary performance be like a black hole, or even a wormhole, in culture? What parallels might be drawn between ecoactivist protest and black holes/wormholes in order to envision the relevance such performance may have for the ecological crisis?

On 30 April 1996, a dozen Greenpeace⁴ activists occupied a defunct oil rig, the Brent Spar, 120 miles off the coast of the Shetland Isles in the North Sea. They were there to protest Shell Oil's plans to tow the rig out into the Atlantic in order to dump it in deep water. Once onboard, they unfurled a banner displaying the slogan "Save Our Seas." The piquant contrast between the physical



1. On 30 April 1996, a dozen Greenpeace activists occupied a defunct oil rig, the Brent Spar, 120 miles off the coast of the Shetland Isles in the North Sea. The occupation was staged in protest of Shell Oil's plans to tow the rig into the Atlantic and dump it in deep water. (Courtesy of Greenpeace)

skill and ideological audacity of the boarding of the rig, and the tired old technique of waving or displaying a banner, marked the first act of a spectacular drama that was to last for almost two months. There were many plotlines running through the protest—including the struggle between multinational capital and environmentalist passion, and the battle between experts for scientific and economic truth—but the “action scenes” on the rig itself are the best place to look for the dramaturgical principles informing the events as a whole.

These scenes can be neatly divided into two “acts” corresponding to the two periods of Greenpeace’s occupation of the rig. The first took place between 30 April and 23 May, and was marked mostly by a pioneering spirit of endurance: this was the first environmental protest of its kind, demanding high levels of technical skill and complicated logistics in the creation of tolerable living conditions for the protesters. Daily internet communiqués were issued from the rig and the Greenpeace support ship, *Moby Dick*, describing conditions aboard. From the 9 May 1995 diary entry:

The idea of living on a floating polluted island is not a pleasant prospect but we have now firmly set this before us. Since the construction of our wind generator above on the heli deck and the increasing media interest surrounding our stay, the morale of crew members has reached a satisfactory level [...] (Greenpeace 1996)

This act ended when the Scottish Courts finally gave Shell permission to evict the protesters. The second act lasted from 7 to 20 June, when a smaller number of activists reoccupied the rig following Shell’s decision, with the support of the UK conservative government, to continue with their plans to dump it at sea. The tone of the communiqués gives a good idea of the rising tensions, and dangers, of the action:

In the early hours of this morning, five activists [...] hung a banner reading “Save Our Seas” from the walkway. They attempted to paint the side of the Spar, but were knocked back by water cannons from the nearby Shell supply vessel, the *Rembas*. Around 10:30 a.m. the climbers got back onto the *Moby Dick*, after spending hours at the mercy of the hoses. As the last three climbers came off, the water cannons were turned on them again and one woman was sprayed with the water cannon for a constant 20 minutes while she was dangling on a rope. Shell has denied this, saying they were “testing equipment.” (Internet Diary 7 June 1995; Greenpeace 1996)

Despite the dangers, the activists stayed aboard the platform even as it was towed over 330 miles out into the Atlantic. Their bravery and tenacity paid off. With rising condemnation in the media and from several European governments, Shell backed down and a major victory for the environment was won: on 20 June the towing tugs turned back towards Norway. One of the activists described the scene:

We were sitting inside the Spar’s compartment, when suddenly the water cannons just stopped. We walked out onto the platform to see if anything was happening. On the *Altair* [Greenpeace support ship] we could see little silhouetted figures dancing around. We couldn’t figure out what was going on, until the *Altair* radioed us and told us the great news. After that moment an incredible rainbow appeared in the sky. Somebody later de-



2. A Greenpeace climber on the Brent Spar. Once on-board, activists unfurled a banner displaying the slogan "Save Our Seas." (Courtesy of Greenpeace)

scribed the vision to look like a "film set," which it did, the light was amazing. (Internet Diary 20 June 1995; Greenpeace 1996)

Not only had David apparently vanquished Goliath, but nature itself seemed to cooperate in the production of a spectacular finale, reproducing the Greenpeace logo in the sky.

6.

Theatrical metaphors can be applied so easily to this action because of the obvious drama in the situation; the theatricality that caused its climactic scene to look like



3. A Shell Oil vessel attacks Greenpeace activists with water cannons. Despite such dangers, activists stayed aboard the rig as it was towed over 330 miles out into the Atlantic. (Courtesy of Greenpeace)

a “film set” made the “art” in this protest especially visible—a spectacle for our times. The sometimes extreme dangers in the “art” of such Greenpeace protests have often dominated the angle of media attention, the daring-do of these “stunts” framed as outlandish circus: an image constantly countered by claims that its activists are highly trained and well-equipped (Durland 1987 [1998]:67–73). Such attention to the performative excesses of events is the price usually paid in any struggle for media dominance, and it is one that also comes with unfortunate side effects for the ecological message of the protest. While the protesters may prefer the “art” of their actions to be invisible, so that the message predom-

inates, the media highlights the “art” because it makes good copy and great images. This “spectacularization” of environmental protest tends to turn nature into a “backdrop” for the action.

The dramaturgy of the Shell protest pushed in this direction as it drew upon well-established theatrical genres. On one level, the protest was straightforward agitprop—a rallying cry for environmentalists. On another level, it was an epic struggle between antagonists with a dominant thematic focus and a through-line that ensured rising tension leading to a climax—fortunately Shell’s collapse—and a denouement. In this performance the dramaturgy tended to ensure that human culture is still the primary focus of attention, despite its environmental themes. So the event’s aesthetics reproduced the very pathology—culture versus nature, nature subservient to humans—that it is ostensibly attacking. There is then a contradiction between the excellent outcome of the protest—a partial victory for “nature”—and the dramatic means by which it was achieved, which in effect made culture the arbiter of nature. In this ecology of performance, despite all appearances, the environment is a very minor player.

7.

How might the trope of the black hole enable us to see a way beyond this kind of creative impasse and the analytical conundrums it generates? The most obvious black hole in the Brent Spar saga is the vision of environmental devastation that inspired the action. This vision posits the impact of human culture on nature as spiraling out of control towards a global catastrophe. The singularity at the heart of this black hole is the “progress” for mankind promised by international capital and its globalizing powers. These forces have to be resisted in order to “save” the natural world. But such resistance sets up a polarity, a dualistic antagonism that, as we saw, reinforces the worldview that created the problem in the first place: culture versus nature. Hence this “progress” really does behave like a black hole, for the more “matter” that falls into it—the more it is acknowledged as a primary force—the stronger its pull becomes. To counteract this intensifying gravitation toward global disaster, mainstream environmental organizations like Greenpeace, paradoxically, tend to take on some of the characteristics of the very bodies they are opposing: corporate structuring, high-tech dependency, media manipulation. So both in terms of the types of dramas their protests create, and their infrastructural mechanisms for production of those dramas, they “mirror”—they are a part of—the pathological process that they oppose. Have these organizations, then, reached the cultural equivalent of the black hole’s “point of no return”; are they on or over the “event horizon” beyond which there is no escape from the prospect of disaster; or are they on an “apparent horizon” that will still allow their resistant efforts to escape the pathology that generates the ecological nightmare?

8.

Given the paradoxical nature of the territory, we will probably benefit by taking Hamlet’s advice and approaching these questions crabwise. The global scale of Greenpeace in part causes it to reproduce the pathology it opposes,⁵ so it makes sense to stay at the level of global movements and to investigate the ecologies of performance generated by an antiorganization that was created especially to avoid some of the traps I have been discussing. One of the most active protesters in Earth First! in the UK, Alex Plows, offers this pen sketch:

In a sense, EF! does not exist at all—certainly not as a campaign group such as Friends of the Earth, with paid membership and policymaking bodies. Instead, EF! is an egalitarian, nonhierarchical “disorganization,”

relying on grassroots networking and local/individual autonomy rather than centralized policy control. (McKay 1996:152)

This closely echoes the 1990 account by a leading analyst of the movement, Rik Scarce:

Earth First! was to be [...] just a force of devoted, unpaid, grassroots activists occupying a niche they had created for themselves in the environmental movement—in short, an anarchy. [...] The closest thing to membership cards are T-shirts with [the] clenched-fist logo and the motto “No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth.” (in McKay 1996:153)

Initiated in reaction to Greenpeace by American activist Mike Roselle and colleagues in 1979, Earth First! has been one of the more militant wings of environmentalism, prepared to damage property, and sometimes more, in the crusade for ecological justice. This “disorganization” aims to extend the reach of protest through the networks of the local with a grassroots activism that balances resistance actions with proactive environmental projects, such as reforestation schemes. Its protests tend to be decentered, and they include tree occupations, tunneling at road-building sites, street transformations, and so on. These tactics tend to locate the protesters as actors in the environment, rather than on it. Their actions are more akin to 1960s guerrilla theatre than 1930s agitprop, often replacing the po-faced demeanor of the mainstream organizations with the humor of pranks and the spirit of a party. The dramaturgies of Earth First! protests, therefore, might throw some useful light into the paradoxical black holes encountered by Greenpeace on Brent Spar.

One of my favorite Earth First! protests is a 1985 action—let’s call it “Smokey the Bear”—which focused on the fact that the great majority of forest fires are caused by logging companies. Here is a full description by Mike Roselle:

In Corvallis, Oregon, 1985, the Forest Service had reserved the high school auditorium for a huge Smokey the Bear birthday party for elementary school children. There were going to be 300 kids present, plus parents. [...] We had heard that the Forest Service didn’t have a Smokey the Bear costume—someone had washed it and the bottom had shrunk [*sic*] way down. Earth First! did, so I put on the bear costume and walked into the party and the kids immediately surrounded me because it was Smokey’s birthday—I was moving through this sea of kids passing out flyers. The Forest Service guys came over and said, “Look, can’t you just leave? We don’t mind you demonstrating outside, but we don’t want you inside here.” I said, “This is my birthday party; I’m not going anywhere [...]” There was a law enforcement ranger there—one of the “tree pigs” as they’re called. [...] He walked over and put his arm around me, smiling at me one of those “You asshole” kind of grins as he said, “Look. Come on. Take this outside!” He had his arm around me and I had my arm around him and he’s pushing and I’m resisting—we’re about the same size. Meanwhile the kids think it’s really cool—the ranger and Smokey! Finally he said, “Well, I’m going to have to put you under arrest.” I said, “That’s going to be really great—arresting Smokey the Bear at his own party!” When he realized that I wanted him to arrest me, he hesitated. Then he tried to tear my head off! But he tried to do it in such a way that the kids didn’t get too freaked out. We had this struggle that was going on that was subtly violent—I said through gritted teeth, “Look you’re going to tear this costume,” and he hissed, “Well, that’s okay.” Finally he

pulled it off and said, “Look kids, he’s not a real Smokey,” and I said, “Hey kids, he’s not a real ranger” and grabbed his flat-brimmed hat and threw it across the room like a frisbee. I said, “Your glasses are next,” and he just kind of stared at me. At this point a bunch of people from our group came over to me, and a bunch of Rangers came over to him, and they pulled us apart. (Vale and Jono 1987:126)

Compared to the Brent Spar action, this example clearly takes us from the sublime to the ridiculous in eco-protest. Yet what is at stake ecologically is just as crucial: forest fires contribute significantly to global deforestation. The fact that Earth First! was broadcasting—that logging companies are 10 times more likely to be the source of fires than anything else, including children and lightning—is highly significant, particularly when the Forest Service was spending large sums on events that effectively cover up the facts. In this example, the black hole of “progress” is deliberately clouded by ignorance or duplicity on the part of the very people who are supposed to be caring for this particular bit of nature.

But what might this little farce indicate about a more hopeful ecology of performance than the one used on Brent Spar? The key is in the dramatic category of farce, for as Eric Bentley has argued, “the principal motor of farce is [...] the impulse to attack (or Hostility)” (1964:255). And the chief source of hostility in this little drama is the Forest Ranger, the image of authority. In the moment when the Ranger rips off the head of Smokey the Bear, yet another black hole between “culture” and “nature,” and one that is much more immediate and sinister than the idea of “progress,” opens up. If the Earth First! protester, in wearing the bear costume, is asserting an identity of sorts between nature and the human, then the Forest Ranger is violently denying it.⁶ So this little act of environmental guerrilla theatre suggests that the power of force available to all authority may be inimical to “nature.” In this respect the dramaturgy of the event, ironically, hands over the power of exposure to the environmentalist, only to reveal that violence between humans may be a function of human violence to the environment, hostility to nature. Here is an especially fearsome black hole of the ecological crisis, for its gravity is generated by a vicious circle in which violence to nature entails violence among humans, and vice versa. And vicious circles produce particularly virulent paradoxes: If you want something to end, never say never.

But there is one small glimmer of hope on the event horizon of this particular black hole that is hinted at by the grim humor in the drama. When the Earth First! shouts out, “Hey kids, he’s not a real ranger,” then skims the brimmed hat across the room like a frisbee, he is gesturing toward a different, more positive kind of paradox. The ranger is not a real ranger because he has, as it were, contradicted himself in public; his actions deny what his uniform says he is; he is a ranger but not a ranger; he is an official custodian of nature who attacks it. Such self-reference suggests another pole of paradox, which is infinity, the quality informing Foucault’s famous formulation that, “All modern thought is permeated by the idea of thinking the unthinkable” (in Hughes and Brecht 1978:18). Such formulations create the conceptual equivalent of a black hole, an infinite regress, which in turn can produce a tenuous type of hopefulness. This can be seen in Arthur Schnitzler’s example of the man who remembers his whole life at the moment of dying, so part of that remembering must be the memory of remembering the whole of his life in his dying moment, and so on ad infinitum. Hence, concludes Schnitzler, “dying is itself eternity” (in Hughes and Brecht 1978:16). But he might just as well have thought that “life is itself eternal.”

Might we say, then, that the paradox produced by the dramaturgy of the Earth Firster’s action evokes the slim possibility of a “wormhole”—a way through to

another universe—as part of the black hole that his protest engages? Maybe I'm grasping at straws, but also maybe that's the best we can do as a next step toward envisioning ecologies of performance that will generate a more hopeful prognosis for nature. In threatening that the ranger's spectacles might well follow his hat, the Earth Firster apparently stalls the violence. If he can really so economically ruin the ranger's vision, in its metaphorical as well as its literal sense, then the forests might well have a better chance of survival—and so might we.

9.

The Earth First! protest, I think, managed to sidestep some of the contradictions of the Brent Spar action because it worked to disguise its own qualities of performance. It was a protest event masquerading as a party, a violent struggle pretending to be a friendly hug, an eviction transformed into a transformative game. Such ambivalent genres link the event to the traditions of the trickster, and to some types of postmodern performance, and create the semiotic slipperiness that in turn produces the paradox of infinite regress through which the black hole may turn out to be not quite so black after all. It achieves this, in contrast to the Brent Spar action, by more overtly engaging in paradox in its performative structure by metaphorically subsuming the human in nature. The bear costume does this: it is a cultural artifact that pretends it isn't. And, through that, it aims to confirm Picasso's dictum: Art is a lie that makes us realize the truth. However tenuous the truth it produced, this is why it was hopeful, giving us clues about what performance needs in order to successfully re-envision the nature-culture divide.

For example, consider the relationships between organizational ethos and aesthetic outcomes in the two events and it becomes clear that the question of "community" is highly relevant to the types of protest dramaturgy that environmental movements are most likely to produce. Both Greenpeace and Earth First! helped to establish international communities of interest during the final three decades of the 20th century, significantly contributing to the creation of global social movements (Cohen and Raj 2000). But in order to tackle multinational corporations and governments, Greenpeace itself had to evolve a corporate identity founded on a particular type of institutionalized community. I am suggesting that this, in turn, in large part determines the types of dramaturgy that will structure its protests. Earth First! was created partly to counteract what its adherents saw as the limitations of this approach, by avoiding institutionalization in order to produce a more fluid sense of shifting communities that form as and when protest seems necessary and appropriate. The dramaturgies of its events are less predictable than those of Greenpeace as the decentered disorganization provides scope for more improvisation and spontaneity in temporary communities of protesters. Similar considerations inform my argument that effective ecologies of performance are much more likely to be found in performance beyond theatre than within the bastions of theatre buildings, however ecologically sound the thinking of their boards of directors.

Environmental radicalism in performance requires an especially iconoclastic and highly reflexive dramaturgy if it is to find wormholes in the black holes of the ecological crisis. Its performative paradoxes have to be finely tuned for it to see through the nature of the "nature" of its own limitations. It cannot act out the philosophy of that old cynic Sam Goldwyn: "Include me out!" Instead, radical ecoactivists will need to imagine ways to dramatize some of the wisest words that Nietzsche wrote: "What then in the last resort are the truths of mankind? They are the irrefutable errors of mankind" (in Hughes and Brecht 1978:67).

Notes

1. DiY (do it yourself) is not so much a movement as a social trend. The term most usually refers to people in the UK (millions of them) who prefer to do their own home improvements. It has been adopted by some segments of the new protest movements, partly as an ironic rejoinder to people who join organizations like Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth but then don't actually do any protesting!
2. This kind of invisibility is somewhat different from the types explored in Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked* (1993). There she refers to the complex interplay of visible reproduction and the Real in an economy of signs that is always already structured for domination of the subordinate "Other," and so determines the power of invisibility in the not-seen of performance itself—whether in the everyday or in cultural locations such as theatre, cinemas, art galleries, etc. This invisibility of art in another type of event or construct rests on a *mistaking* of the highly visible for something that it is not. Performance is seen as something else—in this case protest events—so that the "art" of the performance does its work in unsuspected ways. That "work" may reinforce or undermine dominant ideologies, but in any event it will be all the more powerful for "taking" the spectator unawares: the spectator is seduced into participating in its effects for change.
3. Keith Thomas nicely captures the symbiosis of practice and perception in the denigration of nature when he argues of 18th-century England that, "Just as the landscape-gardeners sought to collect together all natural beauties and to shut out everything unpleasant or inharmonious, so the picturesque travellers looked to nature only for conformity to a pre-conceived model [...]" (Thomas 1984:266).
4. The Greenpeace global organizational phenomenon has its roots in the late 1960s. An ad hoc group of Vancouver environmental activists in 1971 sailed an old boat into the fallout zone of America's nuclear bomb tests on Amchitka Island in the Aleutians. The resulting media coverage generated a growing international wave of support. From the outset Greenpeace dramaturgy was shaped by broadcast networks.
5. I say "in part" because Greenpeace is a complex organization, with many layers and dimensions out of which actions can emerge that to a greater or lesser degree may avoid this pathology.
6. For the sake of clarity of exposition, the following discussion sidesteps some of the complexities of the culture-nature dyad embedded in the event—particularly the issues raised by the anthropomorphism of the bear costume—which infect the protest either toward traditional ritual (magical identification) or toward postmodern performance art (indeterminate sham) depending on the theoretical framework adopted for analysis.

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