

BOOK REVIEW

Capers in the Churchyard: Animal Rights Activism in the Age of Terror

In *Capers in the Churchyard: Animal Rights Activism in the Age of Terror* (Nectar Bat Press (2006)) author Lee Hall¹ takes a fascinating look at the subversive nature of militant activism and its impact on pro-animal and environmental ideologies. Aptly named, the title *Capers in the Churchyard* references a pointedly macabre campaign to coerce a family in England to halt the sale of guinea pigs from their family farm, to a company, criticized for its involvement in animal experimentation. Activists, in response to the family's refusal to cease their participation, blackmailed the family with the bones of a family member they had illegally exhumed from the local "churchyard." Lamenting avenger mentality and militant activism, Hall asserts, "[t]o the extent that anyone credited victory to intimidation, the missing point was that such things are setbacks, not advancements," making the point that too often, radical activists have undermined the overall movement by ignoring the very paradigm of animal rights, respect for all conscious beings. Justifying the means with the end result, Hall argues the activists are oversimplifying the differences between their own positions and their opponents', in their eyes, the difference between good and evil.

A proponent of "thoughtful activism," Hall criticizes any vision for environmentalist dissent that uses fear and terror as a major catalyst for change. Animal activists, Hall argues, are too focused on the amelioration of tragic conditions to deal with the true issue: the human propensity to dominate living creatures. Hall asserts that where animal ownership and husbandry are inherent, a natural degradation of the relationship between human and animal is inevitable, which in some circumstances can serve as a catalyst for discord on a larger environmental level. The ability to achieve a balanced ecosystem and environmental sustainability hinges, mostly, Hall argues, on the human capability of distinguishing ourselves from an anthropocentric² tendency towards hierarchism. Ideo-

¹ Animal advocate, lawyer and teacher, Lee Hall is the Legal Director for Friends of Animals.

² See generally WIKIPEDIA, <http://www.wikipedia.org/anthropocentric>; see also <http://animalliberty.com/animalliberty/articles/penelope/pene-2.htm>. Anthropocentrism,

logical deviance within the movement and worldwide political tumult has in Hall's eyes, contributed to an atmosphere where even civil disobedience is seen as little less than terrorism, a problem that makes traditional, and arguably more productive, protest, advocacy and expression difficult.

Offering a far more palatable solution for balancing animal rights against human domination, author Lee Hall, distances herself from the environmental campaigns widely associated with malicious manipulation, threats, and terrorism. A call for "ethical environmentalism," based on integrity and ideological cohesion, *Capers in the Churchyard* offers a vision for the future of animal activism, one that even in the age of terror, can peacefully coexist.

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generally defined as an ideological perspective that prioritizes the viability of humans above all other beings (also referred to as "human superiority" or "human centeredness") has been attributed, by environmentalists and others, to play a significant role in many of the global issues we currently face like overpopulation, global warming, etc.