



# Recreational Hunting: Ethics, Experiences and Commoditization

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**Abstract:** Starting with the paradox that hunters claim to love the animal species they hunt, this article examines three inter-related issues: the ethics of hunting, the hunting experience and the commoditization of hunting in the contemporary world. I discuss two contrary philosophical approaches to hunting in general, and then turn to the specific problem of the ethics of *recreational* hunting, arguing that its protagonists fail to render a consistent justification for killing animals merely for the experience, but create a hunting ideology which obfuscates the issue. While hunters claim that the chase is the main point of hunting, its conclusion in the kill constitutes the apex of the hunting experience. However, the intensity of the experience fades with the commoditization of the prey in the contemporary world. I present a series of settings according to the extent to which they are 'framed,' ranging from open areas, designated 'wildernesses,' and game parks, to game farms (and virtual hunting establishments), where tame and restricted animals are easily shot for a trophy at a stiff price. The outrage the hunting community raised by those practices, serves to highlight its moral supremacy. The article concludes that the paradox of killing a loved animal inherent in recreational hunting is irresolvable on the ethical sphere, but can be interpreted as an antinomian but exalted ritual, resembling sacrifice in the religious sphere.

**Keywords:** hunting; animal ethics; commoditization; game parks; game farms; virtual hunting.

*... each man kills the thing he loves,  
By each let this be heard,  
Some do it with a bitter look,  
Some with a flattering word,  
The coward does it with a kiss,  
The brave man with a sword!*

(Oscar Wilde)

## Introduction

Students of tourism have, in the last two decades, shown a growing interest in the interface of tourism and hunting under such headings as recreational hunting (Dickson et al. 2009), consumptive tourism (Novelli et al. 2006), sport hunting (Dowsley 2009; Hussain

2010; Loveridge et al. 2007) and trophy hunting (Gunn 2001; Lindsey et al. 2007). Much of that work was done from an environmentalist perspective, with topics of environmental impact, conservation, sustainability and game management in the foreground (Reis 2009). While anthropologists devoted considerable attention to hunting in hunter-gatherer and other simple societies (e.g., Harako 1976; Liebenberg 2006; Nadasdy 2007; Sharp 1977), and social historians studied hunting during the pre-colonial (Allsen 2006) and colonial periods (e.g., Hussain 2010; Sramek 2006; Steinhart 1989; Taylor 2004), detailed studies of contemporary hunting practices are

relatively rare (but see Dahles 1993; Howe 1981; McLeod 2004; Reis 2009), and tend to focus on big game trophy hunting by Westerners in Africa (Lindsey et al. 2007; Novelli et al. 2006; Treves 2009) and in the Arctic (Dowsley 2009; Freeman and Wenzel 2006). But, like tourism studies in general, the study of contemporary hunting suffers from two major shortcomings: One, it has a strong 'Eurocentric' bias: while there are many studies on subsistence hunting in non-western countries (e.g., Alvard et al. 1997; Alves et al. 2009; Carpaneto and Fusan 2000; Condon et al. 1995 and Wilkie 1989), there are virtually none on contemporary recreational hunting by their own inhabitants. Two, it focuses on hunting on the international scale, particularly on hunters for whom hunting is a 'serious' leisure activity (Stebbins 1982), while paying less attention to the occasional tourist-hunter, seeking to taste the experience or to acquire a trophy. This unbalanced distribution of sources constitutes a constraint on the present study.

The study focuses on three interrelated issues: The development of a hunting ethics, which seeks to justify recreational hunting, the nature of the hunting experience, and the ongoing process of commoditization of hunting.

I depart from a fundamental paradox inherent in recreational hunting: recreational hunters take animal life for an intrinsic experience, while declaring an intimate relationship with, and love for the species whose individual members they kill. To take a telling example: for the American 'sportsmen' hunters in the 19<sup>th</sup> century,

*The Adirondack deer symbolized the goodness of nature...It appeared to be a gentle, intelligent, harmless creature, whose life in*

*the wilderness, so far as the hunters knew, was easy and untroubled... the sportsman detested the carnivorous animals like wolves and panthers because these species appeared to be vicious and out of place in the paradise that nature was supposed to be, but the deer, herbivorous, apparently at peace with its fellow creatures, appealed to the nineteenth-century mind as typical of the goodness inherent in the natural world (Terrie 1978: 14).*

However, it was the deer those 'sportsmen' hunters were after. Terrie (1978) comments that

*...while the sportsman may occasionally be aware of the paradox in his sentimental attitude towards the deer and his simultaneous impulse to eat it for dinner, this perception seldom kept him from hunting (p. 14).*

Deer hunters in contemporary New Zealand manifest virtually the same attitudes. Reiss (2009) found that hunters often refer to deer as beautiful and majestic, and admire its beauty, intelligence and physical ability; but though their admiration seems contradictory to the act of killing, for hunters it is part of the performance and needs to happen. Reiss (2009) quotes a hunter who seems to struggle with the ambivalence, admitting that the killing is not the nicest thing to do, but is the thrill of the hunt.

Dahles (1993) similarly found that, in Dutch society, hunters claim to hunt 'for the love of animals'. They hence ambivalently 'kill and eat the animals which they love' (Dahles 1993: 167).

This paradox informs much of the current discussion regarding the morality of killing animals merely for the experience. While contemporary critics attacked recreational hunters as 'murderers' (Dahles 1993: 180), their defenders sought to formulate an ethics, which would make

recreational hunting morally acceptable. But its underlying motive, the chase culminating in the experience of the kill, remains a contested ethical issue.

It is necessary to stress, that 'recreational hunting' is not a sharply distinguishable activity. Loveridge et al. (2007: 226) distinguish between subsistence hunting, market (or commercial) hunting and sport (or leisure or recreational) hunting, on motivational grounds. However, these categories are blurred: 'there is a commercial element in sport hunting because hunted animals are often saleable commodities; sports hunters also often resemble subsistence hunters, in that they choose not to kill more than they can eat' (Loveridge et al. 2007: 226).

Domestic hunters seem to resemble subsistence hunters more than international hunters, who hunt primarily for the trophy, and are therefore at the focus of the discourse on the ethics of recreational hunting.

### **Hunting and Ethics**

The extensive recent literature on the ethical status of hunting, tends to confound two very different issues: the ethics of hunting and the recreational hunting ethics. The former relates to the circumstances, if any, under which hunting (wild) animals can be ethically justified. It takes an exogenous (or 'etic') perspective, which does not relate directly to actual hunting motives and practices. The latter takes an internal (or 'emic') perspective from within the (Western) hunting culture; it is concerned with arguments justifying *recreational* hunting practices, in contrast to other practices which involve the killing of (wild) animals, such as slaughtering, shooting or poaching. Such justifications provided the basis of an ethics and ideology, by which recreational hunters

seek to defend their pursuit against the opponents of hunting.

### *The Ethics of Hunting*

At the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, evolutionary anthropologists declared the turn to hunting a crucial stage in human evolution. Washburn and Lancaster (1968) claimed that 'Hunting has dominated human history...Our interests, emotions and basic social life - are all evolutionary products of the success of the hunting adaptation' (quoted in Cartmill 1996: 9). Hence, they argued, 'Men enjoy hunting and killing and these activities are continued as sports even when they are no longer economically necessary' (quoted in Cartmill 1996: 11). As an inborn trait of 'Man the Hunter' (Washburn and Lancaster 1968), hunting in this evolutionary discourse was not perceived as an ethical problem. However, with the fall of the 'hunting hypothesis' (Cartmill 1996: 17-18) hunting was recognized as a human cultural choice. The uncoupling of the discourse of hunting from human evolutionary theory and the rise of two new, partially discordant, discourses, namely animal ethics and environmentalism, unleashed a heated controversy on the ethical justifiability of recreational hunting. Gunn (2001: 71) states the moral issue clearly 'the question for sport hunting advocates to address [is], if it is admitted that the life of an animal is valuable to it and that animals have an interest in continuing life, whether this interest may justly be overridden'.

The controversy can be seen, on the highest level of abstraction, as a particular instance of conflict between two allegedly 'mutually exclusive ethical worldviews' (Starr 1999: 407) discerned by Max Weber (1991 [1921]), namely, the 'ethics of

conviction (*Gesinnungsethik*)' and the 'ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*),' the former prioritizing a single value (e.g., in the present context, respect for animal life or prevention of pain to sentient beings) irrespective of consequences, the latter taking account of the benefits against costs in the realization of particular values (e.g., preservation of animal life against conservation of natural eco-systems).

Some people view hunting as uncivilized, and hence 'unworthy of civilized beings' (Gunn 2001: 70). Theodore Vitali (1990: 69) condemned 'hunting [as] a disgusting sport that recalls and rehearses the worst in human behavior' (quoted in Gunn 2001: 70). Proponents of an ethics of conviction in the discourse of animal ethics (Fennell 2012a), such as the advocates of animal rights (Fennell 2012b; Regan 2004), animal liberation (Callicutt 1980; Singer 1995), deep ecology (Reis 2009) and eco-feminism (Kheel 1996), prioritize unconditionally the preservation of life of individual animals and hence oppose hunting under any circumstances. Some animal rights activists have expressly condemned hunting as obscene killing, or a war on wildlife (Dizard 1999: 30). The ethicist Regan has argued that 'the goal of wildlife management should be to defend wild animals in the possession of their rights, providing them with the opportunity to live their own life, by their own lights, as best as they can, spared that human predation that goes by the name of "sports"' (Regan (2004: 357, quoted in Fannell 2012: 163).

Such approaches conflict with environmental ethics approaches (Callicutt 1980), whose perspective reflects an ethics of responsibility, favoring the survival of the species over that of individual animals: as

Dizard (1999: 14) has pointed out in his case study, 'in order to survive, deer...must have their numbers controlled.' Killing of animals, and hence hunting, would under such circumstances become ethically acceptable.

Gunn (2001: 68) claims that he had 'found no published source that condemns hunting *per se*'. None of the *gesinnungsethisch* approaches, is completely consequential in its prioritization of animal life; all concedes that hunting animals might become ethically permissible under certain circumstances (Gunn 2001: 82). The *verantwortungsethisch* representatives of an environmental ethics in fact sought to define these circumstances. Environmentalists have justified hunting as an effective means 'to control the numbers of some species' (Gunn 2001: 80) and thus maintain the balance of the eco-system, or even assure the long-term survival of those species themselves. But, this is an exogenous, utilitarian justification, applicable to any kind of killing. There is nothing in the environmentalist approach to justify *recreational hunting per se*, as an enjoyable, discretionary activity. As Dickson (2009: 65) points out, killing individual animals might be necessary for the survival of the species; but 'the appropriate emotion [for necessary killing] would be one of regret, rather than exultation'. Indeed, in wildlife management particular 'destructive species,' which are 'culled' or exterminated are referred to as 'vermin' (Gunn 2001: 68) or 'pests' (Gunn 2001: 78). That terminology indicates that killing them is perceived as an unpleasant, but necessary activity. Dickson (2009) argues, regarding recreational hunting, that 'doing it for fun turns what otherwise might be permissible [or necessary] into something that is wrong. On this reading the motive is central to what is wrong with the activity'.

In other words, the environmental justification of hunting does not justify the recreational hunter's motive for engaging in it. His enjoyment of the hunt demands a separate, intrinsic ethical justification.

#### *Recreational Hunting Ethics*

In the past, the monarchy and aristocracy in the West and the Asian potentates did not see it necessary to justify recreational hunting in their domain; it was perceived as their uncontested privilege. Kete (2002: 20) comments that 'access [to hunting] most directly marked the powerful in medieval and modernizing Europe.' But their privilege came increasingly under scrutiny in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by opponents of the monarchical state. Taylor (2004: 31) details the royalty's opponents 'narratives of privilege and animal abuse that became the scourge of royal patrons of the hunt'. However, once democratization allowed urban professionals and others access to the killing of game, the monopoly on the protection of game for the West European landed elites was broken (Kete 2002: 20-21).

Remnants of upper-class hunting privileges could also be found in the eastern United States. Terrie's (1978) study of 19<sup>th</sup> century hunting in the Adirondacks by 'sportsmen' belonging to New York's or Boston's urban elites, demonstrates their disregard for the very wilderness they extolled, as they frequently killed 'by legally prohibited means, a dozen deer in a few weeks, only a fraction of which were used as food' (Terrie 1978: 9).

The need for a distinctive moral justification for *recreational* hunting emerged only with its plebeization or democratization in the modern West, since the new middle classes lacked the kind of entitlements

enjoyed by traditional elites. In the English-speaking world, that justification was based on the traditionally well-established perception of hunting as a "sport" and on a fundamental modern Western middle class value, 'fairness' (Rawls 1999).

'Fairness' is a basic principle of sports in the sense of 'fair play,' the observation of the rules warranting equal opportunities of winning to the sides in a human agonistic contest. That principle was transposed to the contest between the human hunter and his animal prey in the concept of 'fair chase' (Posewitz 1994). The main injunctions of the recreational hunter's ethic were that the hunted animal had to be wild (rather than tame), unrestrained or free roaming (rather than fenced-off), and have a chance to escape or to kill the hunter. There is nothing in these precepts which would link recreational hunting to the preservation of ecological balance, on which the exogenous ethical justification of hunting is based.

The derivation of the hunters' ethics from sports has an important implication: it ameliorates the reality of the kill, as an inescapable, final act of the hunt. 'Sport' is a 'limited province of meaning' (Schuetz 1973), a variety of 'play' or 'game,' and thus not part of everyday reality. Agonistic sports, like boxing, are conducted under the rules of a 'fair fight'. Within the sportive framework, boxers are permitted to punch each other (according to boxing rules), whereas such conduct would be seen as a brawl, and hence an infringement of public order, in everyday life. Recreational hunting came to be similarly perceived as a playful activity (as against subsistence hunting, which was deemed as necessary for human survival). Like punching in boxing, shooting in recreational hunting is permitted, while strictly prohibited in

everyday life; and huntable animals are called 'game,' an allusion to the playful character of the activity (Kheel 1996). Hunters claim that they have a high esteem for 'fighting' game. Since 'tame animals have lost their fighting spirit [they] are considered unfit for hunting' (Dahles 1993: 178). Hunting is thus seen as a 'playful fight' (Dahles 1993: 179-180).

However, this argument glosses over the fact that the image of the 'hunting game' is one-sided, because 'the animal has not consented to the competition' (Kheel 1996: 31). The prey is not aware of participating in a game; and it is not defeated playfully, but killed for real. Recreational hunting is hence an ambivalent activity, straddling the border between everyday reality and a limited province of meaning. This ambivalence is at the bottom of the controversy about the morality of recreational hunting, its protagonists emphasizing its sports-like, playful nature (for humans), their antagonists its real consequences (for the animals). The analogy between hunting and sports is therefore untenable, but it constitutes an important element in the ideology of the defenders of recreational hunting.

The apparent parallel between 'fair fight' in agonistic sports and 'fair chase' in hunting is also misleading: 'fair fight' implies an equality of chances to win the contest; but in recreational hunting the encounter is heavily loaded against the animal: the relative chances of hunter and prey surviving the encounter only rarely approached a semblance of equality.

Hunting tigers in colonial India (Sramek 2006) and big 'game' in sub-Saharan Africa (Steinhart 1989) approximated most closely an equality of chances for hunter and prey

to kill each other. In colonial India, hunting tigers was considered a dangerous business (Sramek 2006: 666). The British 'sportsmen' hunters showed a high regard for the cunning, intelligence and power of the tiger. They 'described their encounters with tigers as an agonistic, life-and-death encounter between valiant adversaries' (Cohen 2012: 195). A British army officer, Walter Campbell, warned newcomers to India, when facing a tiger while on foot, to 'face him...and kill him if you can; for if you fail to kill him, he will certainly kill you' (Campbell 1864: 162, quoted in Sramek 2006: 659). But hunters have rarely faced a tiger alone. They were typically accompanied by *shikaris* (trackers and hunting guides), from whom they learned 'to hunt tigers successfully as well as safely' (Sramek 2006: 671) from the relative safety of a hunting platform or an elephant's back (Sramek 2006: 663).

During the early colonial period in Africa, European 'pioneer hunters,' hunting big game on foot, accompanied only by African guides and trackers (Steinhart 1989: 254) were exposed to potentially fatal injury, especially from a wounded animal.. But visiting 'sportsmen' of eminence and wealth were accompanied by experienced white hunters as advisers (Steinhart 1989: 253). Over time, 'African hunters [also] began to assume new roles as ancillaries to white hunters' (Steinhart 1989: 254). These various associates certainly reduced the exposure of 'sportsmen' hunters to the risks of attack by the hunted big game.

However, the hunters' apparent exposure to danger helped to reinforce the impression of 'fair play,' while enhancing the thrill of the hunt and the esteem accorded to their achievement. The American elite

hunters 'wanted to believe that their camping trips...involved an element of peril' (Terrie 1978: 11), while they hardly faced any real danger.

Exposure to danger makes hunting resemble an equal contest, and thus appears to constitute a justification of the kill. Big game hunting became the emblematic example on which the recreational hunting ideology is based. The risks involved in hunting other animal species are obviously much lower, and absent in hunting small "game," such as hare or birds, or in indirect hunting methods, such as snaring or falconing, where the hunter does not even face his prey. Furthermore, the more hunting became commoditized in the contemporary world, even shooting big game could become a safe, risk-less entertainment (see below).

In the contemporary world, recreational hunting became quite strictly regulated, both by law and by various 'codes of ethics' instituted by hunting associations. Luke (1997: 25), summed up 'The primary rules of the 'Sportsman's' Code,' on the basis of a review of such codes in the literature, as follows:

- SC1. Safety first;
- SC2. Obey the law;
- SC3. Give fair chase;
- SC4. Harvest the game;
- SC5. Aim for quick kills;
- SC6. Retrieve the wounded.

Luke (1997) argues that 'Several of the ['Sportsman's' Code's] rules presuppose a respect for animals that renders hunting a *prima facie* wrong', and hence argues that 'Sport hunters...are in a paradoxical position - the more conscientiously they follow the code, the more strongly their behavior exemplifies a respect for animals that

undermines the possibilities of justifying hunting altogether' (Luke 1997: 25). Formalized codes thus fail to provide a congruent ethical justification of recreational hunting; but they provide an ideological tool which obscures the paradox inherent in that practice.

However, even as the ethics of recreational hunting became formally codified, its basic rules were increasingly infringed upon by commercial enterprises offering hunting opportunities to casual hunters.

### **Hunting Experience and Commoditization**

Gunn (2001: 70) states unequivocally that 'the central meaning of hunting is killing.' But killing animals is a morally ambivalent act; it becomes more problematic if it is committed, as in recreational hunting, without an extrinsic, particularly utilitarian, purpose, and even more so when hunters affirm their love for the animals they hunt. Killing the prey is an under-emphasized act in the ideology of recreational hunting. Kheel (1996: 32) points to the 'often noted claim of hunters that it is not the killing of the animal that is the primary purpose of the hunt; it is the experience of hunting.' She and others quote Ortega y Gasset's (1985: 97) saying, 'One does not hunt in order to kill: on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted' (Kheel 1996: 32; Reis 2009).

Franklin (2007) in his advocacy of consumptive as against non-consumptive tourism, links his argument to an alleged 'embodied turn' in contemporary tourism, away from the dominance of the disembodied 'visual gaze, perspective, distance and the fleeting visit,' towards 'getting 'up-close' to objects that were hitherto held at arm's length'. He infers that, consequently, 'it is possible that consumptive forms... may

become more attractive [in wildlife leisure] because they offer a more embodied and intimate *relationship* with the natural world' (Franklin 2007: 38-39). Reis (2009) similarly found that for whitetail deer hunters on Stewart Island in New Zealand, the killing act is secondary to the experience of sublimity, stemming from the multi-sensual embodied involvement of the hunter in the island's pristine nature.

In his study of hunters' writings, Franklin (2007) found that the principal joy of hunting is 'the pleasure of temporary union with the natural order' (p. 37). In those writings the 'distinctive emphasis was not the thrill of killing but the thrill (and excitement) of being sensually turned into specific, highly sensitive and difficult tension balances with quarry species'. Franklin (2007) concludes that 'through their written reflections, hunters...seem to suggest that our relating with animals offers a way out of the human-centered world, an opportunity to live less by our intellect and more by our senses...' (p.37). That kind of argument reaches its apex in Kheel's (1996: 36) description of the 'holy hunter,' for whom 'hunting is a religious or spiritual experience,' and becomes 'akin to a religious rite'. Holmes Rolston (1988: 91, quoted in Kheel 1996: 36) claimed that 'Hunting is not sport; it is a *sacrament* of the fundamental, mandatory seeking and taking possession of value that characterizes an ecosystem'. Kheel (1996: 37) concludes: 'Holy hunters do not 'kill' animals according to this world view; rather, animals 'give' their lives'.

However, though in such accounts killing appears to be merely incidental to the over-all hunting experience, there is no escaping the fact that 'the narrative structure of the hunt requires the intention to kill. If someone goes hunting and does not kill an

animal, it is still called hunting. But, if someone goes into the woods without the intent to kill, the term *hunt* cannot be applied' (Kheel 1996: 32). Thus it remains the case that 'there is a moral problem entailed in the idea of pursuing the death of another living being for the opportunity it affords one to engage in an enjoyable experience' (Kheel 1996: 32).

There is considerable evidence that the act of killing the prey is not just an enjoyable act, but constitutes the culminating experience of the hunt. Ann Causey (1989: 332, quoted in Gunn 2001: 70) says 'The one element that stands out as truly essential to the authentic hunting experience is the kill.' The experience of shooting tigers in India has been described in terms of high exhilaration, reminiscent of Maslow's (1964) concept of 'peak experience,' or as a brief but intensive moment of existential authenticity (Cohen 2012: 200).

However, the recent literature indicates a trend towards the prioritization of the trophy over a quest for a profound, holistic experience (Gunn 2001: 74-75). Gunn distinguishes between sport hunters and trophy hunters, who 'kill purely for the sake of acquiring prestigious evidence that they have killed an animal,' but 'cannot claim that they are pitting their wits against a cunning adversary, let alone running a personal risk' (Gunn 2001: 75). They engage in 'plastic hunting' (Gunn 2001, citing Loftin 1988) The trend to trophy shooting is encouraged and facilitated by a wider process of commoditization of recreational hunting, that involves a growing spatial restriction and managerial control over hunting settings, and an itemized pricing of the prey, thereby enabling casual hunters to engage in trophy hunting as a pastime.



According to the prevailing recreational hunting ideology, 'hunting must occur outside and, traditionally, in an area that is considered "wild"' ((Kheel 1996: 32), so the animals would be unrestrained, a precondition of the 'fair chase'. However, as Kheel (1996: 32) points out, 'The boundary between what is considered wild and what is considered tame is rapidly being blurred.' Within the range of hunting settings several main types can be distinguished, according to the extent to which they are 'framed' in Goffman's (1974) sense, namely marked-off, physically or symbolically, from the flow of everyday life (Cohen 2012: 194-195). Accordingly, five major types of hunting settings, ranging from the most open and unrestrained, to the most restricted and constrained one can be distinguished:

1. *Open natural areas* which have been little, if at all, affected by human penetration, such as jungles, forests, mountains and deserts, in which wildlife is fully unrestrained and hunting uncontrolled. Such settings are not separated from the flow of life; they are un-framed. Hunting is open to everybody, whether subsistence or recreational hunter. The forests of colonial India, the colonial sub-Saharan grasslands, the Russian tundra, the tropical forests of South America and the Arctic regions are leading historical examples of this type of setting. There were no hunting permits and no limits on the kind and number of animals killed. Being un-regulated, the concept of 'poaching' was inapplicable. Up to the eve of the Second World War this was the spatially most extensive type of hunting settings in the non-western world, but has by now almost disappeared, as authorities in most countries sought to protect and manage the remaining open natural areas, and control hunting in them for environmental and economic reasons.

2. *Wildernesses*, set-aside, environmentally managed nature areas, barred to uncontrolled human penetration and exploitation, such as national parks, safaris, animal preserves and designated hunting areas; in such settings wildlife is 'culled' and sometimes restocked by the authorities to maintain their ecological balance and facilitate sustainable hunting. Such settings may be marked by signage, but are not physically fenced-off. Animals are thus still unrestrained, though they might in some areas, intensively frequented by humans, become half-tame. Hunting in such settings is mostly subject to permits, but, especially in non-Western countries, 'pouching' is widespread. The number of animals a hunter is permitted to kill is in some instances unlimited (e.g., Reis 2009); but authorities have increasingly restricted hunters to the species and number of prey during a hunting season or a hunting excursion. In wildernesses harboring highly valued, 'exotic' prey, recreational hunting became an important economic resource. Thus, in the Canadian Arctic, each Inuit community is given a quota ('tags') for the number of polar bears to be hunted in a given year. The communities allocate the quota between subsistence hunters and outfitters, who sell them to wealthy hunters (Freeman and Wenzel 2006: 26). The latter pay about \$20,000 for a trip in which they are permitted to kill only a single bear (Freeman and Wenzel 2006: 24). In national parks in southern Africa, hunters are charged stiff fees for the animals they kill. For instance, around 2000, fees in Botswana ranged between USD 25,000-60,000 for a white rhinoceros, USD 3000-30,000 for a lion, and USD 19,000-40,000 for an elephant (Loveridge et al. 2007: 228). In Zimbabwe, the fee for shooting an elephant is presently about USD 60,000 (Betghe 2012: 113).

3. *Game parks (or ranges)*, large, frequently fenced-off areas in which wild animals are kept for hunting under relatively natural circumstances. Southern African game parks are often of considerable size and constitute privately owned or conceded parts of larger wildlife conservation areas. In Namibia, for example, the Dzoti Hunting concession of the Van Heerden Safaris Company spreads over 250 square kilometers (<http://www.vanheerdensafaris.com/Hunting-Areas-of-Van-Heerden-Safaris/caprivi.html>), while some other game parks also embrace tens of thousands acres.

While the animals in such big parks are unrestrained, the owners tend to adjust the numbers of animals to hunters' preferences; hence 'Many game parks...maintain populations of trophy animals...usually drawn from surplus national park populations or are purpose bred like Christmas trees' (Gunn 2001: 76). Some such animals hence probably tend to be half-tamed.

South African companies offer hunting packages, which include high fees for specific game species. Thus, African Sky Safaris, charges from about USD 3,250 for a 5-day tour for beginners (including fees for three animals of some common species), up to USD 78,670 for a 21-day 'lion, buffalo and elephant' tour (including fees for these three species, and for a kudu, a wildebeest and a zebra).

Hunting in African game parks is an expensive activity, pursued by relatively a few, wealthy elite hunters. Hunting is a cheaper, popular pastime in the following setting.

4. *Game farms*, relatively small, fenced-off areas, found predominantly in the U.S.

and Canada (Herring 2000; Ireland 2002), but also in South Africa (Loveridge et al. 2009: 111), in which often quite tamed animals, restricted in their movements or even physically restrained, are kept by commercial establishments to be shot by visiting clients. The principal interest of the clients is in the trophy, rather than in a hunting experience. In some game farms, clients are able to choose from a price list the animal they want to shoot, just as purchasing any other commodity. Unlike in the above settings there is no element of uncertainty involved (Kluger 2002). As one such establishment advertised itself: 'Bag a Trophy, Guaranteed Kill, No Kill, No Pay' (Ireland 2002: 223). Such establishments offer 'the chance to kill a wild animal, right in the heart of your home state, with no experience, not even a license, necessary...for a few thousand dollars' (Ireland 2002: 223). The kill is made easy. Familiar with their habits, 'guides will often simply trap the animals in a corner of the enclosure in preparation for the kill' (Ireland 2002: 226). About 2000, 'there [were] up to two thousand [such] facilities in over twenty-five states [in the U.S.]' (Ireland 2002: 225). Most offered 'hunters' local wildlife, such as elk or deer (Ireland 2002), but some offered rarer creatures, often old animals sold by circuses, or zoos, such as an 'odd rhino, zebra or tiger...for 'trophy fees' of upto \$20,000' (Kluger 2002).

In game farms, animals are 'in any sense of the word, captive - they are kept within enclosures and are dependent on humans for food and shelter' (Ireland 2002: 224). They are 'essentially domesticated animals who have little or no fear of humans' (Ireland 2002: 226).

Shooting such tamed and constrained animals just for a trophy has been dubbed

'canned hunting' and condemned as an 'inhumane and unethical' practice (Ireland 2002). Mitchell (1991) called canned hunts 'slaughter, not sport, with no vestige of fair contest between man and beast.' Gunn (2001: 75) points out that 'Defenders of hunting invariably contrast what they regard as "true" sport hunting with hunting for some other purpose, and especially with hunting just for the sake of killing something, "slab hunting"' (Gunn 2001: 74). But such condemnation of 'canned hunting,' however ethically justified, is not innocent: it helps to uplift the ethical superiority of 'real' recreational hunting, and thus contributes to its social acceptability.

5. *Virtual hunting*, ranches keeping animals, which can be shot by physically remote 'hunters' by way of the Internet. As Bell (2005) puts it in a critical report: 'All you need to do is to align the virtual cameras, aim your virtual rifle and, if you are lucky, a real gazelle lies dead in the Texas grass.' Or as a company advertises the practice without irony: 'Live-Shot.com allows you to sit at home in the comfort of your easy chair and shoot live bullets at *real animals*' (Bookoff 2005). The practice has been condemned, not only by the Humane Society of the U.S., but also by the Texas Wildlife Society and the Safari Club International; the latter stated that the "recently publicized form of Internet activity...has been improperly designated as 'hunting'" (Field and Stream 2005). The practice was declared illegal in the US in 35 states, and is apparently still found in just a few states. But it is significant for the present analysis because it constitutes the end-point of a process of commoditization of hunting, in which different 'limited provinces of meaning' (Schuetz 1973) intersect, so that a virtual act can lead to real consequences.

## Conclusions

Franklin (2008: 39), observing that tourists, who showed reverence for endangered species during a visit to an Australian conservation area, did not hesitate to eat them in local restaurants, concluded that our view of animals is contingent: 'We pass between a variety of viewpoints and discourses on them and they become different objects as we do so' (Franklin 2008: 40). But that insight does not help to resolve the paradox that hunters are thrilled by killing the animals, whom they profess to love: the hunters' love and killing of animals go together, and do not represent separate, contingent viewpoints on animals.

Neither did recent efforts in formulating a hunting ethics succeed to resolve the paradox. I have made a distinction between an exogenous ethics of hunting, which defines the circumstances in which hunting might be ethically justified, and a *recreational* hunting ethic, intrinsic to the hunting community, which seeks an ethical justification for the enjoyment of hunting. By presenting recreational hunting as a sport, a 'limited province of meaning,' implicitly apart from 'real' life, this ethic seeks to represent the hunt as a contest between humans and wild animals, involving a 'fair chase,' and hence a fair chance for the animal to escape. However, unlike in other sports, the animal does not consent to the contest, nor has it an equal chance to survive it. Such an ethic is thus on a shaky ground, and does not provide a consistent justification of the enjoyment of the killing of the hunted animal. I assert that the ethics and the codes built on it obfuscate the issue, and hence help to make recreational hunting socially acceptable, without resolving the paradox.

But perhaps the failed effort to resolve the paradox, and formulating a consistent recreational hunting ethics, missed a crucial point: namely, that the kill, as the culmination of the chase, is perceived by hunters as beyond good and evil, an antinomian, a-moral, but exhilarating act of a virtually mystical appropriation of the life of the animal they love, as Kheel (1996) has indicated; it thus resembles an animal sacrifice in the religious sphere.

However, the existential character of that experience fades progressively as the excitement of the chase came to be overshadowed by a desire for the trophy among contemporary casual hunters. I have mapped-out the process of commoditization of prey animals, which both facilitates and encourages the realization of that desire. That process is marked by four basic characteristics: 1. The emergence of commercial enterprises offering hunting opportunities; 2. The gradual restriction of the range of wildlife, even as the animals become increasingly tamed; 3. The pricing of individual prey animals; and 4. The turning of the uncertainty of the chase into the certainty of the kill. I argue that the wave of criticism and indignation in the hunting community, raised by the offer of restrained animals for shooting by trophy-seeking clients in game farms (and virtual hunting settings), served that community to sharpen its own identity, and to buttress the legitimacy of its practices.

This study suffers from some serious limitations, which are partly due to the unequal distribution of the sources. Its focus was primarily on big game. However, it is questionable if modern hunters, shooting hare, rabbit or squirrels for a meal, enjoy the same depth of experience as big game hunters. There is thus a need for more detailed studies of this kind of hunting.

Perhaps of more importance is the fact that the literature on which this article is based exhibits a marked Eurocentric tendency. It deals virtually exclusively with hunting by Westerners, whether in their own, or in non-Western countries. Like in tourist studies in general, there is a need for comparative studies on contemporary Asian, African or Latin American recreational hunters, who might differ significantly in their practices and desired experiences from those in the West.

Finally, recreational hunting is here studied in isolation from other blood-sports. But a comparison of hunting with Spanish bull-fighting, and other forms of human-animal agonistic confrontation, as well as with animal-animal fights set-up and controlled by humans, could make a major contribution to a culturally sensitive understanding of agonistic contests in the field of human-animal engagement.

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