

The Hunter's Aim: The Cultural Politics of American Sport Hunters, 1880-1910¹

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American sport hunters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries "aimed" to reclaim the frontier past, to sanctify individualism, and to demonstrate their superiority to women and immigrants. Sport hunters, however, achieved ironic results. In proposing that hunting had made Americans great, hunters forgot that Americans had once attributed their greatness to farming. In protecting their sport as a rite of individualism, hunters gave new powers to government. In identifying their sport as a badge of ethnic superiority, hunters undermined hunting as a badge of sexual superiority. In demonstrating their imperial control over the world, hunters demonstrated their fear of a world out of control. At the same time, however, hunters bequeathed to modern Americans an important legacy: the conservation of game.

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Judging by its appearance in national periodicals, sport hunting in the United States reached its pinnacle in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Between 1865 and 1900, no less than thirty-nine weekly and monthly American journals were devoted to field sports, including *Forest and Stream*, *The American Sportsman*, *The American Field*, *Outdoor Life*, *Recreation*, *Outing*, and *Turf, Field, and Farm*. In perusing these journals, one immediately discovers that hunting was the most ubiquitous of American fields sports (apart from fishing) and the most symbolically charged. Simply put, to hunt in the Gilded Age was to define oneself as American while simultaneously defining oneself too as an equal of English aristocrats. To say that sport hunting was ubiquitous and symbolically charged, however, is to point out a great irony. Consider: sport hunting reached its greatest popularity as big-game populations in the United States reached their nadir; as the so-called "frontier" disappeared; as the U.S. became urban and industrial rather than rural and agrarian; and as impoverished immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, people who lacked a big-game hunting tradition, poured into the country.

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Consider, too, that, though hunting had always been an important subsistence activity for pioneers, American colonists had identified agriculture as the basis for civilization. Even in Thomas Jefferson's era, most Americans considered full-time hunters to be barbaric and backwards men who, like Indians, could lay no legitimate claim to land. According to the Enlightenment precepts of colonial and early national Americans, only men with plows—men who rejected hunting as a way of life—had the right to claim the continent (Herman, 2001). Yet somehow, Americans of Theodore Roosevelt's era had come to invert such logic.

To a large degree that inversion occurred precisely because Americans were becoming urban, industrial, and more ethnically mixed. Hunting offered a way to recapture an imagined past. Sport hunting, however, was more than a response to changing demographics and economics; it defined Americanness for other reasons, too. To understand why sport hunting became a quintessentially American sport in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one needs to understand American cultural history. Hunting, after all, did not become symbolically charged in a day or even in a decade, but in a century. To understand the impact of sport hunting on American history, moreover, one must understand what might be called "cultural politics," i.e., the subtle ways that peoples vie for power and social authority through cultural expression. Through hunting, American men sought to invigorate themselves with frontier manliness, rekindle individualism and self-reliance, and demonstrate Anglo-Saxon might to immigrants and upstart foreign powers. The sport hunter's aim, however, proved to be unsteady. As cultural politics, sport hunting produced stunning contradictions. Even as they glorified individualism, hunters gave new powers to government; even as they sought to separate themselves from women, hunters gave women new avenues for self-assertion; even as they sought to demonstrate Anglo-American strength, they inadvertently revealed weakness. The cultural politics of hunting was messy business.

To understand sport hunting as cultural politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, one must understand the quintessential American hunter of the era, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt's love for nature, like Washington's love of truth, emerged during childhood. At age nine, he wrote a "Natural History of Insects"—all insects discussed, wrote the young Roosevelt, "inhabbit [*sic*] North America" (Cutright, 1956). Soon he had collected multifarious specimens and artifacts in his bedroom, calling the display the Roosevelt Museum of Natural History. As an adult Roosevelt continued his study of natural history at Harvard, planning to become a sporting naturalist of "the [John James] Audubon" type. Perhaps Roosevelt's father, one of the founders of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, encouraged his son in this ambition. Though the dryness of academic natural history dampened young Roosevelt's desire to become a professional naturalist (Altherr, 1980; Morris, 1979), he never lost his taste for the study of nature, explaining in 1918 that he could "no more explain why I like 'natural history' than why I like California canned peaches. . . . All I

can say is that almost as soon as I began to read at all I began to read about the natural history of beasts and birds" (p. 321).

To compensate for his childhood sickliness and to apply his talents in natural history—and to relive the adventures of Daniel Boone and Davy Crockett, whom he revered—Roosevelt took up sport hunting at a young age. He traveled to the Midwest to hunt with his brother upon graduation from Harvard in 1880, and in the next few years he would become a big game hunter and cattleman in the Dakota Territory. Upon his return to New York City in 1884 after a hunt for bighorn sheep, the *New York Times* reported that Roosevelt wore the fur cap and coonskin coat of a backwoodsman and carried a rifle and a shotgun (Morris, 131-32; Ward, 348).

Insofar as he sought to portray himself to the public as a naturalist and hunter, Roosevelt repeated a pattern for Americanness that, one might argue, began with Lewis and Clark in 1804. Lewis and Clark transformed hunting from a mere necessity into a symbolic act of taking possession of the continent. Whereas farmers hunted in order to rid the land of pests and predators, Lewis and Clark hunted for the good of science. They took specimens of exotic animal species—species that, with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, became "American"—and sent them back to Thomas Jefferson and his fellow naturalists for examination and cataloging.

Lewis and Clark were not the first hunter-naturalists, but they were the first hunter-naturalists to explore the realm that Americans now defined as theirs. Subsequent scientific expeditions by such hunter-naturalists as John James Audubon and John C. Fremont only confirmed the logic of empire embodied by hunting: far from seeming barbaric and backward, hunting, if done in the service of science, seemed noble and civilized. Through hunting, and through science, Americans could rightfully lay claim to exotic, arid lands that might never feel the bite of a plow. Hence sport hunters of the mid-nineteenth century came to identify themselves not just as hunters but as "hunter-naturalists," men who could demonstrate expertise in habits, haunts, and taxonomy of wild game (Herman, 2001). Roosevelt did not create the hunter-naturalist role; he simply adopted it into his persona.

In the early nineteenth century, however—even after the Lewis and Clark expedition—few men with aspirations like Roosevelt's would have identified themselves publicly as sport hunters, at least not in the urban North. Some Northern men—wealthy men, typically—did hunt purely for sport, yet sport hunting smacked of indolence. In 1885, *Forest and Stream* editor George Bird Grinnell averred that, in earlier decades, "a man who went gunnin' or fishin' . . . lost caste among respectable people just about in the same way that one did who got drunk" (cited in Reiger, 1975, p. 25). The antebellum champion of sport hunting, Henry William Herbert (1968), put it more succinctly: he noted that Northern sport hunters of the Jacksonian era had been "tabooed, as a species of moral and social pariah" (p. 26).

Thanks to a series of popularizers, sport hunters no longer feared such accusations after the Civil War (Herman, 2001). Hence Roosevelt took pride in punctuating his adult life with hunting trips; such trips only gave him

greater notoriety. In 1900, after his election to the vice presidency, Roosevelt celebrated by taking a hunting trip to Colorado. Again in 1901, when notified of his ascension to the presidency after the death of William McKinley, newspapers reported that the nation's new hero, Roosevelt, was hunting in the Adirondacks (Morris, 1979; White, 1954). Upon leaving the presidency in 1909, Roosevelt yet again embarked on a well-publicized hunting expedition, this time to Africa.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Roosevelt demonstrated his affinity for hunting by producing a series of books based on his experiences: *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (1910a), *Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail*, and *The Wilderness Hunter* (1910c). In addition, Roosevelt wrote a multi-volume history called *The Winning of the West* (1910d) in which he portrayed the chivalrous, self-reliant hunter as the central hero of American history. Though noting, realistically, that early American backwoodsmen were farmers as well as hunters, he added that "a race of peaceful, unwarlike farmers would have been helpless before such foes as the red Indians." Hunting had made American backwoodsmen stern and strong: "No form of labor is harder than the chase, and none is so fascinating or so excellent as a training-school for war." Roosevelt added, "The virility, clear-sighted common sense and resourcefulness of the American people is due to the fact that we have been a nation of hunters and frequenters of the forest, plains, and waters" (Roosevelt, 1910c, pp. 146-147; Roosevelt, N.D.).

In uttering these sentiments, Roosevelt was not so much inventing a pattern for Americanness as repeating an older pattern. For if Lewis and Clark had made hunting into a scientific act, it was Daniel Boone who had made hunting seem romantic. Though Boone's fame came initially with the publication of John Filson's *Discovery, Settlement, and Present State of Kentucke* in 1784, Boone's fame peaked in the Jacksonian and antebellum eras. Between 1820 and 1860, artists celebrated Boone in painting and sculpture, and writers sought to define his virtues in print. At least seven book-length biographies—really hagiographies—of Boone appeared before the Civil War, each outdoing the other in praise for the hero (Herman, 2001).

Boone was not just any hero, of course; he was a hero suited to a particular people at a particular historical moment. Though no evidence shows precisely who read the Boone literature, bookstores and lending libraries appeared primarily in cities and towns, and it was in those places, as well as on the frontier, that Boone found youthful admirers like Roosevelt. Books by American authors, moreover, though they became cheaper in the antebellum years due to improved printing technologies, remained relatively expensive (usually a dollar or higher) until the appearance of the dime novel after the Civil War. Pirated copies of foreign books were cheaper because of weak American copyright laws (Taylor, 418-20; Wallace, 1986). Given that the Boone literature was intended for youths who depended on parents' assets, one surmises that it found a niche among those like Roosevelt who came from prosperous families.

Boone appealed to young men of the nineteenth century because he represented a new, autonomous model for manliness. Unlike their colonial

counterparts, nineteenth-century youths, as they reached adulthood, tended to hive off from their families. Fewer and fewer young men followed fathers, uncles, or older brothers into a family trade. Often, young men moved hundreds of miles from their families, pushing ever westward. Another stream of young men migrated to the cities, where they often lost contact with the traditional institutions of social authority: the church, the local community, and the extended family (Halttunen, 1982; Sellers, 1991). Deprived of institutions of social authority, these young men were forced to learn "peculiar self-possession," the very quality that Boone was said to possess in abundance (Flint, 1847; Herman, 2001). Like Boone, each young man was forced to become, in the words of Joseph Kett (1977), a "fortress of character" (p. 108).

Far from being indolent, Boone, according to hagiographers, hunted assiduously for profit, refused to drink or to smoke tobacco, and never slighted his creditors (Bogart, 1854; Flint, 1847; Hill, 1859; Peck, 1847). Boone was an idealized self-made man, the strong-armed, self-possessed hero of a glorious struggle for survival. Boone, of course, lived not just in a wilderness, but in a libertarian wilderness, where each man determined his own fate, without the imposition of government, law, or inheritance. Boone was the model for young men who found themselves, in Alexis de Tocqueville's words, "always standing alone," holding "their whole destinies in their own hands" (Sellers, 1991, p. 251). As the so-called "First White Man of the West," moreover, Boone taught youths the lesson of empire (Flint, 1847). Rather than claiming the continent with the plow, Boone led "the march for a nation to the seat of empire" by doing chivalrous battle with noble beast, as well as by doing chivalrous battle with ignoble Indians (Bogart, 1854). The real Boone recalled killing only three Indians in his lifetime and, in later life, held no animus toward them, but the Boone of literature was more martial and less forgiving (Faragher, 1992).

Having absorbed the lessons of the Boone literature, Roosevelt—who as an adult cited Boone as one of his heroes—transformed hunting into the sine qua none of "the strenuous life," without which the nation would devolve into irrelevancy on the world stage. In Roosevelt's eyes, there were two types of men and two types of nation: strong, courageous hunters and weakly cowards. Those who opposed war with Spain in 1898 fell under the latter category; they were men "who fear the strenuous life, who fear the only national life which is really worth leading." Whether they suffered from timidity, laziness, ignorance, or overcivilization, argued Roosevelt, these weaklings would allow "bolder and stronger peoples" to "pass us by, and . . . win for themselves the domination of the world" (Roosevelt, 1910b, pp. 9, 29).

Having absorbed the predatory imperialism that saturated the literature of Boone, moreover, Roosevelt—probably not by accident—began hunting in foreign lands not long after he supported expansion into Cuba and the Philippines. "Our greatest statesmen," Roosevelt once wrote, "have always been those who believed in the nation—who had faith in the power of our people to spread until they should become the mightiest among the peoples of the world" (Roosevelt, 1910b, p. 205). Whereas George Armstrong Custer

had dressed in buckskins in the 1870s in order to show that nature had chosen him to rule the army, the Indian, and the continent, Roosevelt dressed in buckskins, it seemed, to show that nature had chosen him to rule other parts of the world as well. Via Roosevelt, the cult of Boone metamorphosed into a cult of empire.

Among the great adventures of Roosevelt's life was his expedition to Africa in 1909, not long after he had left the presidency. Roosevelt conceived of this expedition as a form of play, as he told his son Kermit, yet he also wished to serve science (Roosevelt, 1921). Designated the Roosevelt-Smithsonian Expedition, the party's task was to collect specimens of African mammals for the Smithsonian Institution much as Lewis and Clark had collected specimens for Jefferson a century earlier.

Inspired in part by Roosevelt's example, dozens of sport hunters consecrated themselves to science by offering to collect specimens for the Smithsonian. At times, sport hunters bombarded the Smithsonian with photographs of unusual animals they had killed or offers of specimens that the institution did not want. On the whole, however, the alliance between sportsmen and the Smithsonian (and other scientific organizations) was beneficial to both sides. While hunters got to dress themselves in the cloak of science, the Smithsonian received valuable specimens and data on species variation from exotic locales. "I think it good policy," wrote an assistant secretary of the Smithsonian in a 1911 memorandum, "to encourage" collecting by "hunters who have become interested in the Museum" (Mearns, 1911).

As the era of the great American buffalo hunt ended, the era of the great scientific safari began. Bearing papers attesting to their appointment as "Collaborator in Zoology" by the Smithsonian, wealthy hunter-naturalists gained entrée into exotic hunting grounds otherwise closed to foreigners. The American Museum of Natural History in New York City and Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology in Cambridge also worked closely with wealthy sportsmen eager to serve science (Herman, 2001).

Despite the rhetoric of conservation, the slaughter wrought by sportsmen in foreign lands was often as immense as it had been on the Great Plains. "I have killed six Lions," bragged Roosevelt in 1909, "two Rhinos—both of which charged viciously —, two Giraffes, one Hippo, together with various kinds of antelope, and Zebra, a Waterhog, and so forth [emphasis added]." "And so forth" added up to two hundred animals by November 11, 1909. In defense of the slaughter, Roosevelt explained that "five-sixths" of these were to be preserved for the Smithsonian and the rest were to be eaten (Morison, 1954, pp. 11, 38).

Unlike their English counterparts, Americans did not pave the way for colonization of lands they hunted, but they served the cause of empire in a different way. Through far-flung expeditions that received coverage in books, magazines, and newspapers, hunters like Roosevelt sought to demonstrate the scientific, sporting, and racial superiority of Americans. The formula that had given Americans cultural propriety over North America now seemed to make them masters of the globe. Americans were not political masters of the

globe, yet in flying the American flag over Africa, or in standing triumphant over a cape buffalo, Roosevelt and his fellow hunter-naturalists attested to the global superiority of white Americans.

Insofar as American Indians took note of white Americans' pride in hunting, they likely choked on the irony in it. The very men who long ago had claimed the continent from Indian hunters through farming—and who continued to urge Indians to take up the plow—had come to see themselves as a hunting people. For Theodore Roosevelt and thousands of others, hunting was the root of Americanness. According to Roosevelt, the backwoods hunters of colonial and early national America were “emphatically products native to the soil,” men who had “lost all remembrance of Europe and all sympathy with things European.” These men had been the first to “become Americans, one in speech, thought, and character” (Roosevelt, 1910d, pp. 130, 146). So far had Roosevelt reversed the farmer-over-hunter dialectic that when “excess” Indian lands became available under the terms of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, he seized upon them not as lands for potential homesteaders but as potential game preserves (Isenberg, 2000). Though animals were not to be hunted on these preserves, they were intended for the propagation of game species that, seemingly, had made Americans a great people.

Lest we read these events exclusively through the lenses of hypocrisy or racism, it is important to consider that excess Indian lands, under the terms of the Dawes Act, would have been sold to private interests had they not become government property. With the Great Plains gobbled up by farmers and ranchers, newly available Indian lands became prime candidates for preserves because they were cheap, unspoiled, and potentially large, not simply because they were the lands of Indians. Nevertheless, irony permeated the events that saw the transformation of Indian lands into game preserves, especially since Roosevelt believed that Indians had lost their claim to ancestral lands because they had been hunters (Roosevelt, 1910a).

Conservationists missed the farce of making Indian lands into game preserves because they were blinded by romantic nationalism. Through Roosevelt and his fellows, hunting became more than the mystical source of American manliness; hunting became the mystical source of American national—and racial—identity. Now Roosevelt's noble, light-skinned race of American hunters spoke of world dominion.

For all his imperial bluster, the multifaceted Roosevelt remained true to the tradition of Boone by treating his hunting guides as equals rather than servants. “I remember,” wrote Kermit Roosevelt (1921), “how amazed some were at the lack of formality in his relationship with the members of the [African] expedition.” “Father,” he added, “treated everyone with the same courtesy and simplicity, whether it was the governor of the Protectorate or the poorest Boer settler” (pp. 45-47).

While hunting cougars in Colorado, Roosevelt was equally democratic. There was no “stiffness and formality” in the president's demeanor, recalled guide John B. Goff (1909). Goff's feelings for Roosevelt “grew warmer” every day until, at the trip's end, he felt he was parting with a “dear friend.”

Roosevelt's "demeanor, his manliness, his generosity, his big noble heart, his simplicity," reported Goff, "make him a companion in the flesh worthy the company of a king" (p. 7).

This democratic bent, even if it made him "worthy the company of a king," made Roosevelt popular as a man and as a president. If he became at times a bully on the international stage, he remained a friend of the people, a man who would rein in the tyrannous reach of monopolists and robber barons. Although his willingness to regulate business may have fallen short of what others desired, he understood that runaway individualism had to be restrained by the state. "A great State," he explained, "can not rely on mere unrestricted individualism, any more than it can afford to crush out all individualism" (Roosevelt, 1910b, p. 310). By restricting the individual rights of the powerful few, the individual rights of the many would be saved.

And saved these individual rights had to be, if America was to remain America. The crusade to preserve individualism seemed imperative in a nation transformed by corporations, monopolies, and bureaucracies. As late as 1870 the average American factory had eight employees. By 1890 the average factory had twenty employees, and factories with one hundred or more employees were common (some employed more than ten thousand). Such changes primarily affected working-class Americans, who were often consigned to unskilled manufacturing jobs throughout their lives, yet middle-class Americans were also affected. The individualism of the Age of Jackson was being swallowed up by corporate bureaucracies and urban anonymity. More and more middle-class men found themselves working as clerks and salesmen, jobs that seemed to compromise one's manliness every bit as much as they had in earlier decades. Meanwhile the Civil War, which, after the Revolution, had been America's second great age of manliness, receded into the misty past. Even spirituality seemed to retreat in a society run on principles of efficiency, science, and bigness (Chandler, 1977; Hays, 1957; Kirkland, 1931; Noble, 1977; Trachtenberg, 1982; Wiebe, 1967).

As Henry Adams saw it, the "dynamo"—the huge Corliss engine that produced the electricity for machinery at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia—had become more powerful than the Virgin Mary, who long ago had inspired peasants to build cathedrals like Chartres. Machines and corporations had come to dominate the world, while humans had become impotent and God distant (Adams, 1931).

By founding the Boone and Crockett Club in 1887, whose purpose was to promote "manliness and self-help" in the tradition of Boone and Crockett as well as to promote game laws and wildlife preserves, Theodore Roosevelt sought to save the vestiges of American individualism in the age of the dynamo (Grinnell, 1910). In doing so, he found himself enmeshed in irony. Only by restricting the individual's right to hunt could hunting be saved as a rite of individualism. And only by strengthening government could the individual's right to hunt be effectively restricted. Government, law, and bureaucracy were the tools with which hunting and wilderness were to be saved.

Having hunted in South Dakota and the Adirondacks, Roosevelt had come to believe that wilderness hunting demanded more "hardihood, self-

reliance, and resolution" than hunting on a private game preserve, which was a "dismal parody" (Roosevelt, 1910c, pp. 29, 270). Private preserves were like monopolies, controlled by autocrats who took game at their pleasure. No amount of private preserves would sustain the character of the nation; public preserves were imperative. During his presidency, Roosevelt accordingly tripled the size of the National Forest System, set aside fifty-one wildlife refuges by executive order, and created corps of experts and agents to administer them (Reiger, 1975; Trefethen, 1961). Roosevelt did not usher in a utopian era of wildlife and wildlands management, but he did establish a precedent for federal environmental oversight. It was this precedent—not the limited acreage that Roosevelt actually set aside—that would play a critical role in saving wildlife, habitat, and hunting on behalf of the democratic many, or at least the many who could afford hunting licenses and travel expenditures.

As naturalist, sport hunter, and devotee of the cult of Boone, Roosevelt made himself into an "American Native," an indigenous man who seemed to incarnate the spartan, manly virtues of American nature. With his ascension to the presidency, the campaign to make America a nation of hunters reached its acme and gave way to a new campaign to ensure that America would remain a nation of hunters. What Roosevelt may not have realized was that, in the process, he had undermined the manliness of the sport he endorsed.

Subverting the Hunt

In October 1905 two hunters took a railroad from Utica, New York, to the Adirondack Mountains, then boarded a steamboat for the twelve-mile passage across Fourth Lake, and arrived at their lodgings in time for dinner. The following day, accompanied by guides, the hunters—their "packs laden with provisions and ammunition for a week's stay in the woods"—hiked eight miles through thick forest, then another three miles through mountains to Lime Kiln Lake. There the guides transferred the gear into boats and rowed it and the hunters across the lake, after which the party hiked another five miles "over steep mountains." When "it seemed as though [they] could possibly go no further," the hunters arrived at a "rude but comfortable log cabin" where the guides prepared flapjacks, bacon, and coffee (Preston, 1906, p. 589).

Early the next morning, the hunters embarked on a deer hunt. Coming upon a buck with a nine-point rack, one of the hunters fired, but the deer bounded away, and the hunter's "heart sank." But blood on the leaves where the deer had stood proved the shot to be true, and the deer's carcass was found a short distance away. The guide, who lugged the deer three miles back to the cabin, estimated its weight at 175 pounds. "To say I was overjoyed," remarked the successful hunter, "would draw it mildly. . . . My rifle had done its work well" (Preston, 1906, p. 589).

This narrative, appearing in *Field and Stream* in 1906, was typical of the genre: first came the pilgrimage by rail and steamboat, then the long tramp

in the woods, and finally the successful hunt. What made this story different was the fact that its author and her companion were women. Having listened to the hunting tales of the "sterner sex," Emma Preston (1906) had decided that she must bag a deer (p. 589).

Like Preston, innumerable women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demanded that they be included in the society of hunters. Some accompanied their husbands into the woods, whereas others went alone or with female companions, but all seemed to agree that "there seems no reason why women should not enjoy [hunting] as much as men do; and derive lasting benefit from the carefree and health-giving experiences of camp life" (Bennett, 1903, 11).

The desire to hunt, claimed Mrs. Arthur F. Rice (1896), was as instinctive in women as in men. "Two or three generations of hunting blood asserted themselves in my veins," she recalled, when she witnessed "a beautiful buck" swimming across an Adirondack lake. Though too far away for a good shot, Mrs. Rice "registered a vow then and there that I would at least shoot at a deer before leaving the mountains." Upon fulfilling her vow a few days later—and bagging her deer—she realized that she "had nerves, and that they were shaking a little" (men called this "buck fever"). Women, she added, "have a right to tremble, or even faint, after the excitement is all over" (pp. 84-85).

At the same time that these huntresses got their deer, others, inspired perhaps by Annie Oakley, the celebrated markswoman of Buffalo Bill's Wild West, joined trapshooting clubs. Women's trapshooting clubs, reported the *Illustrated Sunday Magazine* in 1914, had appeared in Wilmington, Philadelphia, White Plains, Minneapolis, Youngstown, Chicago, and Brunswick, Ontario, and more were forming. Members of the Chicago team claimed to be the best shots in the world, having broken 199 of 250 clay pigeons during a match with the Wilmington club (Women Becoming Expert Trap Shooters—Team Issues Defy, 1915).

This claim was hardly a new one for Americans. Men's rifle teams engaged annually in matches with foreign marksmen at Creedmore, a rifle range on Long Island, to determine who was the best in the world, and thousands of male trapshooters likewise competed at American conventions and club meets. *Country Club Life* reported in 1914 that some two hundred thousand Americans had taken up trapshooting, enrolling in some three thousand clubs, thus satisfying (if vicariously) their innate urge to hunt (Rutter, 1914). For women, however, to learn to shoot demonstrated "a complete reversal of the hereditary and instinctive antipathy to firearms" and offered "a spectacular illustration of woman's changed attitude toward her sphere in life" (Lord, 1914, 14).

This observation was not entirely true. Frontier women had been hunting for generations. According to oral tradition, Rebecca Boone had hunted in Daniel's absence, having once bagged a deer in addition to her own horse (Faragher, 1992). This male taunt belied the fact that frontier women could and did hunt just as successfully as men. Women of frontier Indiana, noted

William C. Smith (1867), "could handle the rifle with great skill, and bring down game in the absence of their husbands" (pp. 77-78). Recalling her antebellum childhood in northern New York State, Livonia Stanton Emerson similarly testified that "it was not long after we moved into this wilderness before father brought mother a very nice rifle." Mother "took lots of game with that rifle," added Emerson, and even taught her ten-year-old son to hunt deer at night (Emerson, N.D.).

For women of the backwoods, hunting was not so much a sport as a means of subsistence. Emerson's mother may have taken pleasure in the chase, yet like her male counterparts, she killed deer for the skillet. Her hunting differed dramatically from that of middle-class and elite women of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who hunted first for sport and second (if at all) for food.

It is hard to say how many middle-class and elite women gave up their "instinctive antipathy to firearms" to hunt deer or shoot clay pigeons. As sport hunting's popularity peaked among men, however, women—judging from their contributions to sporting periodicals—began to take interest. Women did so, as did men, because shooting was fun; hunting allowed women to engage in activities otherwise off-limits, and it seemed invigorating and healthy.

Thus Frances Roe (1909), whose husband was an army officer stationed in the West after the Civil War, dismissed wives who complained about the monotony of the frontier as "stay-at-homes who sit by their own fires day after day and let cobwebs gather in brain and lungs." Mrs. Roe suggested that these "fault-finders" and "gossips" learn to ride and shoot and join their husbands in field sports, although she acknowledged that she preferred fishing to pursuing a "splendid animal running for his life" (pp. 22, 42).

Mrs. Roe (1909) was eager to participate in field sports partly because she enjoyed them but also because, outfitted in the feminized tunic of a West Point cadet and riding sidesaddle, she did not give up her womanliness. Nor did other women. Women hunters did not cross-dress in the field; they wore silk sashes and ankle-length dresses and sometimes permitted themselves "to tremble, or even faint" after the kill. Yet in taking up hunting and shooting, women sought to break down the barriers of middle-class patriarchy.

Long before women joined trapshooting clubs and hired guides in the Adirondacks, they had rapped at the door of equality in other ways. As members of churches, tract societies, temperance societies, and abolition societies, and as readers, consumers, and schoolteachers, middle-class women had made themselves visible in Jacksonian and antebellum America. Meanwhile, agrarian patriarchy—in which the farmer-husband ruled with Biblical, even regal, authority—gave ground to a middle-class code of gender relations that made women the principal rearers of children and paragons of Christian virtue (Epstein, 1981; Jensen, 1986; Kerber, 1980; Melder, 1977; Norton, 1980; Ryan, 1981).

Like other norms and traditions, middle-class gender roles oscillated in Jacksonian and antebellum America. While men expected wives to remain

subordinate, no biological standard demanded submission, nor did middle-class women invariably oblige men by remaining in the home. In this new society, women seemed to ask themselves unconsciously (or consciously, in the case of women's rights advocates) what justified male authority. If women could appear in public as teachers and temperance advocates, could they not participate in other aspects of public life? What necessitated male supremacy in a world ruled by pen rather than plow?

As if to resolve these questions, men incorporated the frontier drama of hunter versus beast into a middle-class identity, asserting their manly vigor and the womanly weakness of their wives. "Women cannot conveniently become hunters or anglers," wrote popular essayist Wilson Flagg in 1871, "nor can they without some eccentricity of conduct follow birds and quadrupeds into the woods" (cited in Keeney, 1992, pp. 69-72). Flagg encouraged women who wished to participate in an outdoor hobby to take up botany. Because hunting was the fount and metaphor for the courage and manliness so necessary for success in politics, business, and professional life, women, who could not hunt, could hardly be expected to fend for themselves outside the home.

In the Gilded Age, women rapped more insistently on the door of equality. Middle- and upper-class women—called "new women"—increasingly insisted on going to college, working outside the home, voting, wearing less restrictive clothing, and practicing birth control (Banta, 1987; Marks, 1990; Scott, 1978; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985). Women—at least some women—would no longer be mere helpmeets and mothers, asexual creatures linked more closely to the realm of angels than that of humans. Hence, whereas men had entered the woods to bolster patriarchy (and continued to do so), women of the late nineteenth century entered the woods to challenge it.

That women could succeed in a Darwinian wilderness of strife and struggle was the lesson taught by Martha Maxwell, "the Colorado Huntress." Educated at Oberlin College, Maxwell moved to Colorado with her husband in 1860, where she developed her skills as a naturalist, hunter, and taxidermist. The climax of her career came in 1876, when she exhibited a prize-winning diorama of mounted game animals—specimens she had shot—at the Colorado-Kansas entry of the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. Above buffalo, elk, and mule deer, Maxwell—an ardent advocate of women's rights—placed a sign that read "Women's Work" (Benson, 1986).

How many huntresses joined Maxwell in the campaign for women's rights we do not know, but once women became hunters, suffrage was not far behind. If women were strong enough to hunt, surely they were strong enough to enter politics and business. Among women, the right to hunt could be as much a metaphor for the right to citizenship as it was among men.

Women's newfound interest in outdoor life, however, did not necessarily merit an invitation from men to join the wilderness club. When Kate Field, a journalist and lyceum lecturer, encouraged women to enter the Adiron-

dacks in search of mental and physical vigor, Thomas Bangs Thorpe's response was bilious. Women, he argued, had nothing in their education "that makes such places appreciated, and no capability for physical exercise that causes that attempt to be pleasantly possible. . . . Let the ladies keep out of the woods" (Cadbury, 1970, p. 48). Field's sin was that she had introduced the feminine into the forest bastions of middle-class manliness. Yet women were permitted, albeit reluctantly, to join the sporting "fraternity" in the Gilded Age and Progressive era. In joining that fraternity, women joined men in presenting a united front against the anxieties of the age.

Presenting a United Front

In these years eastern and southern Europeans—swarthy Jews and Catholics—immigrated to America's cities, taking industrial jobs and joining labor unions. Fears of being swamped by foreigners were exacerbated by fears of race suicide. Though the term "race suicide" was first employed by psychologist Edward A. Ross in 1901, the concern over reproduction had emerged as early as 1880, when census data showed that Anglo-Saxon women were bearing fewer children than ever before. Psychologists meanwhile warned of the dangers of "neurasthenia," or "lack of nerve force," caused by too much brain work, and sociologists and historians worried over the closure of the frontier (Bederman, 1995; Gosling, 1987; Green, 1984; Lears, 1981). Without the challenge of settling new lands, how would Americans remain a strong and vigorous people? America seemed to suffer from a crisis of overcivilization.

Confronted with the problem of ethnicity and class and fearful of mental and physical decline, middle-class Americans embraced their racial identity as Anglo-Saxons and progeny of the frontier. "No nation facing the unhealthy softening and relaxation of fibre that tends to accompany civilization," announced Theodore Roosevelt, "can afford to neglect anything that will develop hardihood, resolution, and the scorn of discomfort and danger" once associated with the frontier (Nash, 1982). Moved by this logic, middle- and upper-class women, with tacit approval from men, took up hunting and shooting. These pastimes might not produce high birthrates, but they assuaged high anxieties. Yet women's participation in hunting tended to undermine its promotion of manliness, the very trait that hunting was supposed to save.

Children too were to be brought into the hunting fold. Psychologist G. Stanley Hall updated four-stages theory by positing that humans, like societies, experience distinct stages of development. In one of these stages, wrote Hall (1904), "the child revels in savagery." Only by encouraging their children's "tribal, predatory, hunting, fishing, fighting, roving, idle playing proclivities" could parents assure them of graduating to a higher stage and becoming happy and productive adults. Without these outlets for their youthful energies, children would lose interest in life, developing "weakness of character" and "slowness of intellect" (cited in Bederman, 1995, pp. x, 90).

To promote and to capitalize on the child's need to revel in savagery, Ernest Thompson Seton founded the Woodcraft Indians, and Dan Beard founded the Sons of Daniel Boone in the first decade of the twentieth century. In these organizations, along with the Boy Scouts, which soon subsumed both, American boys were taught the skills of tracking, trapping, and taxidermy (Beard, 1917). Elsewhere, boys learned the "elevating" ethic of sportsmanship, which had been "the training school of the greatest nations of ancient and modern times," according to the *American Field*. "The man who wishes his boy to get the most benefit from his boyhood, in the way of preparation for later life" wrote the *American Field's* editor in 1904, "will . . . give him an insight into its purest and most remunerative pleasures, by putting into his hands a gun, rifle, or rod" (Early American Impressions, 1904, p. 389).

Throughout the Gilded Age and Progressive era, dozens of hunting novels for boys appeared in libraries and bookstores. Charles Austin Fosdick, or "Harry Castlemon," wrote the Sportsman's Club Series, the Rod and Gun Series, and the Boy Hunter Series, while Edward S. Ellis wrote the Deerfoot Series and the Boy Pioneer Series. Together with works by George Bird Grinnell, William Temple Hornaday, Emerson Hough, and Stewart Edward White, these books gave American boys a sense that hunting and pioneering set them apart from less vigorous boys of other countries. If the Boone literature had made boys into American Natives, the new literature made them nativists.

Typical of such books was Thomas W. Knox's *Young Nimrods in North America*, published in 1881, in which two city boys embark on adventures in a dangerous world filled with Irishmen, lumberjacks, and Indians. Hunting and fishing all the while, the boys—like Lewis and Clark—journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific, escorted by their chaperone, the Doctor, who gives them lessons in natural history.

Like others of the genre, Knox's book was no dime novel; it was intended to "be unexceptionable in point of morals" so that it could "be freely placed in the hands of the youth all over the land" (Knox, 1881). With some 250 illustrations, in addition to a gilded cover and spine depicting moose, fish, hare, owl, fox, pronghorn, Indian with bow, and charging buffalo, the book was clearly meant for the children of parents with means.

The irony is that the men, women, and boys who were encouraged to reacquire the spartan, manly virtues of frontier life were products of an urban, middle-class society that dated back at least two generations. Their memories of the frontier were more likely to be drawn from the novels of James Fenimore Cooper or Charles Austin Fosdick than from actual experience or oral tradition, and they were as likely to learn to hunt from peers or from guides as from fathers and grandfathers (see, for instance, Curtis, 1888; Dimock, 1915; Doll, 1909; Gibbs, 1909; Lee, 1900; *My First Buck*, 1904). In identifying with the frontier experience, however, they conceived of their society as a realm of racial struggle and strife, a realm in which it was critical for all—men, women, and children—to learn the skills of hunting. Hunting,

once considered barbaric and backward if not performed in the service of agriculture, became in the Gilded Age and Progressive eras a badge of American identity, a badge worn proudly by the most "civilized" of Americans.

While native-born Americans were encouraged to hunt, state governments restricted the hunting rights of immigrants (partly as a conservationist measure and perhaps partly due to the fear of armed radicals). According to William Temple Hornaday (1913), one of the nation's leading conservationists, the Italian immigrant would not only "root out the native American and take his place and income" but also would behave like a "human mon-goose" in destroying native songbirds for food (pp. 101-02). Only strict game laws and strict enforcement would solve the problem. In keeping with this nativist philosophy, Hornaday wrote anti-union, anti-Bolshevik, and anti-German tracts during and after World War I, and his New York Zoological Park hosted a world conference on eugenics in the early 1920s (Dunlap, 1988; Haraway, 1984/85).

The whole Back to Nature movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in which men like Hornaday played such prominent roles, distinguished morally and physically healthy Americans from seemingly degraded aliens pouring into the country. The movement also distinguished Americans from aliens who remained outside the country, whether they be Filipino, Japanese, Indian, or African. "When the real crisis arrives," warned G. L. Lehle, a promoter of rifle clubs, in 1908, "when the newly-awakened and insolent hordes of another race must be reckoned with—then I hope to serve at the side of intelligent students of the art of rifle shooting, knowing that by reason of their superior ability and proven patriotism they will prevail over the enemy" (Lehle, 1908, p. 21).

This imperial identity was buttressed by the National Collection of Heads and Horns, a fantastic assemblage of the heads and horns of big game. In the National Collection, William Temple Hornaday, who served as director of the New York Zoological Park for some thirty years, sought to assemble examples of the world's big game species before they had disappeared entirely. This collection memorialized the chivalry, courage, and manliness of elite sport hunters yet preserved the democratic ideal by offering admission to anyone who cared to visit.

Unlike displays of American game at the Philadelphia Centennial International Exhibition and the World's Columbian Exposition, the National Collection was international rather than primarily American in scope. The collection's chief boast was the largest set of elephant tusks ever recorded, and horns and heads were arranged by taxonomy for comparison of species from throughout the world. "To know thoroughly the horn-bearing mammals of the world," wrote Hornaday in 1907, "is to know the world also" (pp. 2, 5). As America became a world power, the American Native became a man (or woman) of the world.

Henceforth, however, there would be two sorts of knowledge of horn-bearing animals: that of those who hunted them and that of rank-and-file visitors to the collection. It was "natural," wrote Hornaday (1907), for men

“to desire a collection” of trophies but “not desirable that many men should be animated by the desire for large collections” as that would lead to the destruction of game. Most men would have to be content to visit the National Collection; hunting could no longer be a democratic way of fashioning American identity. The “personal trophies” collected by wealthy men with the wherewithal to navigate the globe, however, were “quite another matter.” By adding the names of wealthy donors to each display, Hornaday gave ample credit to the upper-class sportsmen who had parted with their personal trophies for the good of science and the public (pp. 5-6).

The National Collection of Heads and Horns, like Charles Willson Peale’s American Museum, the National Institution, and the United States National Museum of the Smithsonian Institution before it, rendered the exotic into the familiar. At the same time, the National Collection attempted to instill in urban Americans—including working-class immigrants—a reverence for the upper-crust, Anglo-Saxon hunters who conquered buffalo, elk, and grizzly and, ultimately, elephant, lion, and rhinoceros as well. If the conquest of nature through sport hunting and through the exhibition of game species was initially a way of taking possession of the American continent, in the early twentieth century it became a way of demonstrating world power. In the National Collection, hunting reached its apex as a symbol of American greatness. Americans here demonstrated their Rooseveltian glory, their ability to make any foreign beast—or any foreign power—into a trophy. In a sense, however, the National Collection revealed not so much a sense of power as a sense of weakness. Unable to impose order on the “insolent hordes of another race,” in the words of Lehle (1908), Progressives like Hornaday imposed order on alien races of animals.

To make such observations is in no way meant to belittle the accomplishments of Hornaday and his fellow conservationists of the Gilded Age and Progressive eras. In sparking the conservation movement, sport Hunters bequeathed later generations of Americans a wonderful gift. We should recognize, however, the rich irony that hunters found in their “aim” to reclaim manliness, to affirm their superiority to foreigners, and to salvage the individualism of an earlier era. In a sense, sport hunters succeeded at accomplishing all these goals; in another sense, however, sport hunters simply initiated a new chapter in the murky history of the cultural politics. Had American men looked back over their shoulders as they galloped off for the hunt in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they might have seen their wives charging hard to catch up while immigrants looked on with indifference and American Indians snickered. They might also have seen rural and working-class men, the hated “pot hunters” of the nineteenth century, redefining themselves as “sportsmen” with a little help from arms and ammo manufacturers who sought wider markets.

When hunters looked ahead, meanwhile, they would have seen not a world of bold sport hunters reigning over North America and the world, but different sports heroes altogether: basketball players, football players, and baseball players, men (and women) who played team sports suited to a corporate America. Amid this dizzying picture, however, sport hunters might

have taken some comfort. True, urbanization, or rather suburbanization, in conjunction with a rising chorus of opposition to killing sentient beings, would make hunting increasingly problematic for middle-class men in the second half of the twentieth century. The camera, meanwhile, would offer a means of capturing a trophy without killing it, thus undermining the object of the hunt. But on the broad green lawns of the American outdoors, another individualistic sport took root. If middle- and upper-class American men no longer entered nature to hunt, they could at least enter nature to golf, an exercise that celebrated a gentler, more polite manliness suitable for the twentieth century, yet retained many parallels with hunting. The trajectory of the golf ball reminds one of the trajectory of the bullet; the suddenness and power of the stroke reminds one of the suddenness and power of the gunshot. Neither golf nor hunting, moreover, rely on brute strength, speed, or endurance, but rather on concentration and finesse, the skills of gentlemen. By exchanging guns for clubs, American sportsmen continued to practice mental discipline amid the splendors of nature. In doing so, however, they did not necessarily leave women, immigrants, and foreigners behind; they simply created a new theater for cultural politics.

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