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# Shots in the Dark

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di

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Abstract: *Shots in the Dark* is a chapter in the book *Rape of The Wild* by Andrée Collard that appeared posthumously (1988). Revised and completed by her friend and collaborator Joyce Contrucci, it is the result of studies and reflection on the relationship between women, nature, and animals over more than a decade. The subjugation of women and the exploitation of the natural environment by men began by the emergence of a cultural phenomenon: the hunt. Since then, the “myth of man the hunter” has been invoked to justify every kind of violence and oppression. “Hunting is the *modus operandi* of patriarchal societies on all levels of life – [...] This is blatantly done when the prey is a woman, an animal or the land, but it extends to whatever phobia to seize and obsess a nation, whatever this be another nation or a race other than that of power-holding groups”.

## Introduzione

Nata a Bruxelles nel 1926, Andrée Collard crebbe in un villaggio di lingua francofona. “L’amore per natura, il legame spirituale con la terra, tutte le sue creature e le entità ecologiche – ha scritto la sua compagna e collaboratrice Joyce Contrucci – ha sostenuto la sua anima e le ha dato la forza interiore che l’ha guidata nella vita” (Contrucci 1988, p. 172). Fin da bambina amava vagare nei boschi dove liberava gli animali dalle trappole e gli uccelli dalle gabbie, batteva siepi e cespugli per far volare gli uccelli lontano dai cacciatori che sfidava a viso aperto.

Durante il Secondo conflitto mondiale si unì alla Resistenza e spesso scortava chi voleva fuggire in Inghilterra attraverso i fitti boschi che ben conosceva. Quattro anni dopo la guerra, senza conoscere l’inglese, si imbarcò per gli Stati Uniti dove studiò all’Università del Texas per poi trasferirsi in Messico dove si laureò in letterature romanze e dove rimase fino al 1958. Tornata negli Stati Uniti, si stabilì prima ad Harvard dove conseguì il dottorato, poi a Brandeis, presso Boston, dove tenne corsi di spagnolo e di letterature comparate. Negli anni in cui vide la luce e si sviluppò il movimento delle donne fondò la sezione bostoniana della National Organization for Women e si dichiarò femminista radicale e lesbica.

Con Joyce Contrucci negli ultimi anni della vita si trasferì a Norwell dove fondò un santuario per uccelli e visse in una prospettiva di autosufficienza.

*Shots in the Dark* è un capitolo del libro apparso postumo (1988), *Rape of The Wild* (pp. 33-56). Rivista e completata da Joyce Contrucci dopo la morte di Collard avvenuta nel 1986, l’opera è il frutto della riflessione sul rapporto tra le donne, la

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\* Non siamo riusciti a risalire ai detentori dei diritti, che siamo pronti a riconoscere in qualsiasi momento.

natura e gli animali nel corso di oltre un decennio a partire da una lezione tenuta al corso di Mary Daly all'Università di Boston. *Rape of the Wild*, ha scritto Mary Daly nella *Prefazione* al volume, è una delle opere più significative del movimento delle donne, uno studio che risale alle radici patriarcali del dominio che aveva spezzato i legami tra le donne e la natura e che solo il femminismo avrebbe potuto riallacciare.

Si tratta dell'unica opera ecofemminista che, prima degli scritti di Marthi Kheel negli anni Novanta, affronti in maniera articolata la questione della caccia e il mito dell'uomo cacciatore.

La caccia è il *modus operandi delle società patriarcali* ad ogni livello della vita – sostenere un livello significa sostenerli tutti. Per quanto innocuo possa essere il linguaggio – noi cacciamo ogni cosa, dalle abitazioni al lavoro alle menti – essa rivela una mentalità culturale così abituata alla predazione che si inorridisce solo quando minaccia di ucciderci tutti e tutte, come nel caso delle armi nucleari. Alla base di tutto questo cacciare è un meccanismo che identifica/nomina la preda, la insegue, entra in competizione per lei e mira a sparare il primo colpo. Questo si compie palesemente quando la preda è nominata donna, animale, terra, ma si estende a qualsiasi fobia colga e ossessioni una nazione, che sia un'altra nazione o razza o altri gruppi diversi da chi detiene il potere.

Il mito dell'uomo cacciatore, una narrazione antropologica che attribuisce l'evoluzione umana all'apparizione della caccia come fenomeno culturale – è volto a giustificare ogni forma di oppressione. Benché basate solo di supposizioni, come le antropologhe hanno ampiamente dimostrato, queste supposizioni sono diventate teorie e le teorie sono diventate dogmi in un sistema di pensiero chiuso che non ammette alternative e che è dominato dai dualismi natura/cultura, soggetto/oggetto.

Il tema dell'oggettivazione, cuore della scienza moderna, attraversa tutto il volume e i temi che affronta: la caccia, la vivisezione, la riproduzione femminile. L'“ingegneria della vita”, un progetto patriarcale volto ridefinire la creazione, trasformare i corpi in macchine, appropriarsene, manipolarli per ottenere una superfertilità, alterare chimicamente la terra per ottenere una superproduttività, è un processo che allontana progressivamente il genere umano dalla natura. Risuona in queste parole il pensiero di Françoise d'Eaubonne (Bianchi 2021) che, come altre opere ecofemministe non di lingua inglese, ha avuto scarsa risonanza, ma che probabilmente Andrée Collard conosceva. Neppure l'opera di Collard ha avuto il riconoscimento che merita e certamente è stata dimenticata o menzionata di sfuggita; nel ripubblicare questo suo scritto intendiamo rendere omaggio alla profondità della sua riflessione, alla sua lungimiranza e non da ultimo alla coerenza tra la vita e il pensiero.

### Opere citate

Bianchi, Bruna 2021, *Fertilità della terra e fecondità femminile. Il pensiero di Françoise d'Eaubonne negli studi recenti*, DEP, n. 47, pp. 121-141.

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## Shots in the Dark

Every creature is better alive than dead, men and moose and pine trees, and he who understands it aright will rather preserve its life than destroy it.

Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*

Man is not a natural species: he is a historical development.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

### Movers of culture: hunters

Man has become an expert at rationalising his destructiveness. There are instances of the hunting and killing of nature and animals from which many reasonable men, not completely alienated from their feelings, would turn away in horror and disgust. But when violence is presented under the guise of a “noble purpose”, all kinds of abuses go unrecognised and often are even praised. Such is the fiction surrounding the hunt.

While it is preposterous to single out one activity from the totality of human experience and interpret it as the prime mover of culture, hunting – man's oldest profession – has been given that dubious honour. According to current anthropological theory, hunting is “the master integrating pattern of culture”<sup>1</sup>, it is “the crucible in which natural selection pounded at the grist for the human spirit as well as the human body”<sup>2</sup>. In this view, *Homo sapiens* is a natural predator “whose hunting activities account for the achievements of civilisation. Without it we would be no further than the ape.

Such theorising is puzzling to those who do not subscribe to the inevitability of violence and male domination which are implicit in it. The belief that “our intellect, interests, emotions and basic social life”<sup>3</sup> have been formed by the experience of the

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<sup>1</sup> William S. Laughlin, *Hunting: An Integrating Biobehavior System and Its Evolutionary Importance*, in *Man the Hunter*, edited by Richard B. Lee and Irven De Vore, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago Illinois 1968, p. 319.

<sup>2</sup> Melvin Konner quoted in Philip Zaleski, *Of Archaeopteryx, the! Kung San, and Dendrite Spines*, in “Harvard Magazine”, LXXXV, 1, September-October 1982, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Sherwood L. Washburn and C.S. Lancaster, *The Evolution of Hunting*, in *Man the Hunter*, edited by Lee and De Vore, p. 293.

hunt contains a basic error. The use of the pronoun “our” lumps together women and men of all cultures and of all times in an activity that commonly has been attributed to males only and which other scholars have demonstrated to have been far from universal. In addition, such speculation ignores all anthropological data which would show that survival relied more heavily on the skills necessary for the gathering and consumption of vegetable food than on the killing of animals and the eating of meat<sup>4</sup>.

Given the frequency with which men wage wars and commit violent crimes, proponents of the hunter theory of evolution would have been more credible if they had limited themselves to their observation that “men enjoy hunting and killing”<sup>5</sup>. For it is not hunting that formed our intellect, emotions, etc., but rather those hunters who, finding pleasure in the hunt, abandoned the ancient rituals of atonement that had accompanied the killing of animals for food. Thus, *some* hunters in *some* parts of the world developed a form of power based on the model of hunting. These hunter-kings spread their value systems through the violence of wars, destroying nature, killing animals, raping women and in general abusing those they enslaved. It is in this context that human intellect, interests, emotions, and basic social life evolved in patriarchy.

By glorifying the hunt as a major evolutionary step, many social scientists justify a culture of brutality toward and rape of all that is viewed as “fair game”. Moreover, hunting as a sport serves as the paradigm activity in which the re-enactment of the hunt and the kill reinforces the normalisation of a violent act. By playing hunter, man ritualises what he sees as his greatest glory: his passage from ape to human and the consequent creation of a category of domination, the politics of which have changed the face of the earth and the quality of our lives.

If theorists can argue that man is linked inevitably by his own evolutionary process to hunting/killing/violence, then man may be absolved of responsibility for his violent culture in which nature is perceived as fair game, as the rightful object of his predatory inclinations. For this reason it is necessary to review the hunter theory of evolution, to challenge its assumptions and understand its implications for all those who fall under the category of prey in patriarchy.

The hunter theory of human evolution was first formulated in the early 1900s. In the wake of Darwin and Freud, Raymond Dart suggested that violence was the factor differentiating man from other primates. By violence he meant the calculated killing of animals, whether the kill was used as a source of food or not. Since then Dart’s successors have added elaborate qualifiers but the theory remains essentially unchanged. That is, that through the cooperation and increased intellectual activity demanded of the successful hunter, the groundwork for the emergence of *Homo sapiens* was laid.

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<sup>4</sup> See Sally Slocum, *Woman the Gatherer: Male Bias in Anthropology*, in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter, Monthly Review Press, New York 1975, pp. 36-50, for an example of an “early” effort by feminist scholars to expose the male bias in anthropological theories and to provide evidence and argument for the importance of gathering in early hominid survival and evolution.

<sup>5</sup> Washburn and Lancaster, *The Evolution of Hunting*, p. 299.

## Weapons

Of particular importance to this theory is the dating of tools, most commonly interpreted by scholars as weapons. The farther back such implements can be dated as instruments of violence the more credibility is gained with respect to man's immersion in a hunting culture. Furthermore, the more remote the find in terms of time, the more conjecture is required to give meaning to these tools, with less opportunity for confirmation and more possibility for control<sup>6</sup>.

Paleoanthropologists and archaeologists disagree considerably in the dating of early "tool" manufacture. As they shuffle years by the millions, we do not know on whose hairy chest to pin the honour of having started us on the road to culture. However, according to them, a hairy chest it undoubtedly was, even though it is thought that women were the gatherers of fruit, nuts and leafy things for which they fashioned *agricultural* tools, and this well *before* man took to hunting. Still the scholars insist that although the presapient hominid was making spectacular adjustments to the new environment caused by changes in climate and the heavings of a turbulent earth, it did not become fully human until it dawned on the male that he could flake stones and kill large animals and that he could either eat the carcass or leave it to rot on the ground.

According to Jacques Bordaz, a specialist in the classification of "tools" (read "weapons") from the Pleistocene Epoch, "man could now bands to better exploit plants and animal resources"<sup>7</sup>. Archaeologist R.E. Leakey, son of the famous Mary and Louis Leakey who dated modern man's appearance in Africa at a still controverted two to three million years, writes that *Homo erectus* "were people *in tune* with, their environment, exploiting every part of the plant and animal kingdoms [*sic*] the season of the year dictated" (emphasis added)<sup>8</sup>. Louis Leakey carried his fascination with early "tools" to the point of experimenting with them, i.e. killing animals, presumably to test the efficacy of early man's technology in exploiting his environment. Thus, acts that culminate in the wounding to death of sentient creatures are interpreted as manifestations of man's harmony ("in tune") with his environment, his "tools" being the crucial invention which enabled him "better" to exploit the earth.

## Division of labour

The shift from a gathering to a hunting culture did in fact have enormous consequences for the development of the human species. What can and must be argued is whether that development was beneficial. As R.E. Leakey has observed, there is a correlation between the increasing importance of meat in the diet and the

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<sup>6</sup> In this connection I am reminded of the party slogan of the totalitarian state in George Orwell's *1984* (Signet Classic, New York 1961, p. 32; Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1970): "Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past".

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Bordaz, *The Tools of the Old and New Stone Age*, Natural History Press, New York 1970; David & Charles, Newton Abbot 1971, p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Richard E. Leakey and Roger Lewin, *Origins*, E.P. Dutton, New York 1979; Macdonald & Jane's, London 1979, p. 133.

increasing dominance of men over women<sup>9</sup>. Justification for this dominance is to be found in what functions as the cornerstone to the theory of evolution which glorifies the hunt: the division of labour between the sexes. With this division, the prototype of man as active and woman as passive is sealed in a time frame that began hundreds of thousands of years ago. With the killing of large animals and the consequent “division of labour” (read “dominance of male over female”), it is believed that cultural evolution “began overtaking genetics as the major determinant of human behaviour”<sup>10</sup>. Anthropologist John Pfeiffer could draw this odd conclusion because to him, as well as to all enthusiasts of the hunt, hunting created new situations which strained the brain, causing man to invent co-operative strategies and a language with which to communicate them to fellow hunters. Therefore, male hominids developed larger brains to accommodate these new functions and females developed a wider pelvis to accommodate large-brained offspring. Few have described this situation more naively than Pfeiffer, for whom larger brains created “a fundamental problem in the design of the body, a problem involving the optimum dimensions of the female pelvis”<sup>11</sup>. He goes on to say:

From a strictly engineering point of view, the obvious way of allowing for the delivery of bigger-brained infants is to enlarge the pelvic opening and widen the hips, and evolutionary pressures were at work which favored this solution. The difficulty is that individuals with wider hips and related modifications lose a measure of mobility. As far as speed is concerned, the ideal pelvis is a male pelvis. Women cannot generally run as fast as men, a disadvantage in prehistoric times when flight was called for frequently<sup>12</sup>.

Thus females, no longer able to run with the males, grew increasingly dependent on them for protection against “predators” and for the spoils of men’s hunting expeditions.

According to Pfeiffer, hunting also brought about a sexual revolution for man, for “he [*sic*] [became] independent of one great natural rhythm, the internal rhythm of oestrus” and thus “it became possible to select the time and the place for intercourse”<sup>13</sup>. As psychologist Joyce Contrucci exclaimed: “This is a slick, educated way to say that the female lost control of her own sexuality!”<sup>14</sup> In this new social arrangement, women could be raped at the whim of the male who “selected the time and the place”, especially if she could not run as fast as he could. She is perceived by him as available. In short, like the animals he allegedly hunted, she had become fair game<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>10</sup> John E. Pfeiffer, *The Emergence of Man*, Harper & Row, New York 1969; Thomas Nelson, London 1970, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47 and 142.

<sup>14</sup> Conversation, Norwell, Massachusetts, January 1981.

<sup>15</sup> Pfeiffer carries the division of labour theory even further with one of his inimitable sleights of hand that eliminates women from prehistory. He writes that by 10,000 BC the world population is estimated at 10 million. Of these 10 million, 100 per cent were hunters. He wrote this after he had taken great pains to establish that hunting was for males only.

The hunt accomplished what its rationales want to justify, and that is the dependence of women on men for food and protection – a crippling dependence which is defined and accepted as “natural” in patriarchal culture. Thus, students in introductory psychology courses read:

Until recently in human history it probably was to everyone’s advantage for males to act masculine and females to act feminine. In the primitive societies survival depended on a division of labor between the sexes. The women, bearing and nursing one child after another, could not roam far from home. The men were free to range far and wide hunting for animals to provide food. Moreover the men, being physically stronger, protected the home against wild beasts and unfriendly strangers. The tradition was established early and served a purpose. Women were dependent. Men were dominant<sup>16</sup>.

### Violence

There is, it seems, no end to the wonders of the hunt. Man’s “progress”, horn of a violent act and culminating in the domination of one sex of one species over the entire world population of living creatures, led men to the killing of other men, i.e. to war and manslaughter. But not all local populations of australopithecines made and used tools [weapons] and it is likely that only a few effectively made the transition to tool use and then went on to displace or destroy other local populations of australopithecines that had not achieved an equal degree of cultural [*sic*] evolution<sup>17</sup>. Supposedly this “effective transition” was accomplished through man’s “aggressive” drive which theoretically is fixed in the brain (“prewired” – a term which likens the brain to a computer) or in the genes (phylogenetically programmed). In either case, we are told that man’s violence and his domination of nature, animals and women are inevitable and pivotal in the achievements of civilisation. (It is interesting to note that warring is considered a mark of *superior* cultural evolution. Over 2,000 years ago, Aristotle had rationalised the justice of war with the same reasoning. Wars were necessary to secure slaves (people *born* inferior) and good soldiers acquired their skills by practising on animals (hunting).).

Paul MacLean, former chief of the Laboratory of Brain Evolution and Behavior at the National Institutes of Mental Health (Poolesville, Maryland) has located the bio-sociological origin of violence (“aggression”) in the reptilian brain – a knot-like affair swaddled in layers of neocortex that have accrued upon it in the course of evolution. Being the oldest part of the human brain, this supposedly is the seat” of inborn impulses or instincts which account for man’s intolerance, territoriality, “incessant struggle for position and domination”, hierarchical social organisations as well as the violence man uses to achieve his social arrangements and goals<sup>18</sup>.

Assuming that the reptilian brain plays such a crucial role in violent behaviour, what happens to the notion that women are naturally passive? Do we lack a reptilian

<sup>16</sup> Jerome Kagan and Ernest Havemann, *Psychology: An Introduction*, 4th edn, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1980, p. 391

<sup>17</sup> Gerald Berreman et al., contributing consultants, *Anthropology Today*, Communications Research Machines Inc., Del Mar California 1971, p. 169.

<sup>18</sup> Mary Long, *Ritual and Deceit*, in “Science Digest”, November/December 1980, pp. 86-91, 121.

brain in the same way as men lack a complete X chromosome? If intolerance, territorial struggle and violence are a function of the neural circuitry of an arcane part of the human brain, how can one explain the historical and present existence of human societies which strive for peaceful coexistence, which retreat into inaccessible areas when invaded, which do not encourage power needs or project masculine images of bravery and violence?<sup>19</sup> Has their “prefrontal neocortex ... the mental stuff of which we imagine angels are made”<sup>20</sup> been on a faster developmental track than that of the rest of humanity? Have their reptilian brains atrophied? What has “gone wrong” with them? Such wide differences in social behaviours and social arrangements place MacLean’s “findings” on shaky ground. They are too neat and self-serving to be real.

According to ethologist Konrad Lorenz, man’s “aggression” is a carry-over of his animal origins but, unlike other animals, man lacks the phylogenetically programmed inhibitory mechanisms to check the hunting skills he acquired suddenly at some point in prehistory. What Lorenz fails to explain is why, in the whole animal kingdom, man is so uniquely imperfect as to lack the inhibitory mechanisms with which other animals are born. Lorenz claims that man’s killing problem is exacerbated by the anonymity and the physical-emotional detachment afforded him by artificial and remote-control weapons. He noted that “no sane man would even go rabbit hunting for pleasure if the necessity of killing his prey with natural weapons brought home to him the full, emotional realization of what he is actually doing”<sup>21</sup>. Clearly “natural weapons” are hands. Hands pick up stones, spears, high-powered rifles, etc. with which man kills his prey for pleasure, and these hands are directed by a conscious human brain. The problem is precisely the fact that there can be no full, emotional realisation, regardless of the kind of weapons used, when one can perceive a sentient creature as object (prey). The underlying emotional detachment/deadness allows for the process of objectification which is at the base of the hunting syndrome.

The solution, then, is to make “the best” of a bad situation. Lorenz suggests “dangerous undertakings, like polar expeditions and, above all, the exploration of space” in which nations could “fight each other in hard and dangerous competition without engendering national or political hatred”<sup>22</sup>. Such solutions reflect the mentality of violence and domination that are so much a part of a rapist culture. They are instances of rape of the wild where nature again is objectified, probed, used, and brought under control of man’s futile attempt to redirect his “aggression” to “better” ends. Of course, these theorists do not consider such attempts as futile. They construe what is actually violence as progress, and continued violation of the integrity of

<sup>19</sup> These characteristics common to peaceful human societies were described by G. Gover, *Man has no “killer” instinct*, in M.F.A. Montagu (ed.), *Man and Aggression*, Oxford University Press, New York 1968 and reported in Kay Deaux and Lawrence S. Wrightsman, *Social Psychology in the 80s*, 4th edn, Brooks/Cole, Monterey 1984, pp. 208-209.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Long, *Ritual and Deceit*, p. 121.

<sup>21</sup> Konrad Lorenz, *On Aggression*, translated by Marjorie Kerr Wilson, Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., New York 1966; Methuen, London 1966, p. 242.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 282.



being as achievement. In this sense, ethologist Richard Dawkins believes that “modern man” has outgrown his prehistoric past and has the ability to modify not only his environment but his genetically programmed behaviour<sup>23</sup>. Now that “we” have acquired enough knowledge of ourselves, “we” can control those destructive traits that brought us to the brink of extinction.

And yet, looking at the direction of science, reading about men’s futuristic visions, we see more and more control exercised by fewer and fewer individuals over the many, through cybernetics, mood and behaviour control, pre-natal genetic and memory alterations. These “achievements”, together with the nuclear and chemical threats to the environment, the robotisation of work, the desensitisation to life, the chemicalisation of foodstuffs, the proliferation of iatrogenic diseases, the extinction of animals and plant species, the increasing rigidity of the political structure, the impoverishment of imaginative life – all give reason to think that if this represents the optimum in “human” evolution, the hunters who are shaping it are insane.

### **Movers of culture: gatherers**

As Virginia Woolf has said, though we see the same world, we see it through different eyes. We have seen the world too long through the eyes of man. Women have been taught his version of the past, and have been indoctrinated with his values, the values of the hunting state. Yet it is likely that gathering was the prime mover of culture until the “battle of the sexes” occurred which revolutionised society. The transition from mother-right to father-right took thousands of years and was accomplished with more or less thoroughness according to the size and strength of the matriarchies scattered throughout the world. Before then, it is probable that groups of females and males engaged in day-to-day living, expanding their ties with nature. The division of humans along sex lines became real, therefore important, only at the time when one sex sought supremacy over the other – a time that began with the killing of animals sacred to the Goddess and the debasement of Mother Earth.

It is easy to fall into a romanticisation of the remote past and imagine social realities that fit one’s vision of a good life. Many archaeologists have done this. Their reconstructions of prehistory are based on the most fragmentary evidence – some splintered bones, a few teeth, and what seems to be an abundance of worked stones (called “tools”) scattered throughout the world. They wax eloquent on what may have been our origins even while admitting that their schemes are “a complete fairy tale, a fabric of *more or less inspired guesses*” (emphasis added)<sup>24</sup>. But a guess – inspired or not – leaves open the possibility of other “guesses”, other possible explanations for the interpretation of gathered facts and observations. Guesses become valid theories when they are viewed as plausible enough to be accepted by the community of scholars. Therefore it is not difficult to see that when this community is predominantly comprised of those in power, theories substantiating their position in society would gain more favour than those suggesting a differing

<sup>23</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1976, p. 215.

<sup>24</sup> Leakey and Lewin, *Origins*, cit., p. 117.

view. One can also see that the more threatening the alternative is to the status quo, the more emphatic the rejection or, as in the case of the idea of women as movers of culture, the more it is simply overlooked/ignored/dismissed.

By denying validity or even recognition to alternative interpretations, access to alternative values and beliefs capable of freeing a society from its own self-destruction is closed. Thus “guesses” become theories and “theories” become self-serving dogmas when proposed in a closed system of thought. The interpretations given to archaeological/anthropological finds must be seen for what they are: “explanations conceived in the light of individual belief”<sup>25</sup>. Thus it is not surprising that the finds of archaeologist James Mellaart, at Catal Hüyük, Turkey, which revealed the existence of a home site of gynocentric settlements dating back at least 10,000 years<sup>26</sup>, were minimised. Despite the finding of “tools”, Goddess figures and religious objects that would support Mellaart’s theory of a society organised around the primacy of the female, cultural anthropologists selectively tell us of the “polished obsidian mirrors found at Catal Hüyük which were presumably an early reflection [*sic*] of female vanity”<sup>27</sup>. Although in keeping with patriarchal propaganda about women, this comment hardly “reflects” the nature of the real women who built and shaped this highly evolved community. What can be seen in the polished mirrors of Catal Hüyük is just how much of *our* prehistoric past remains buried. It is important for women to remember that man’s theories are guesses – explanations that suit his nature and support his state. Likewise it is important to remember that women’s guesses are theories capable of offering interpretations of the past that reflect our values, our beliefs and the significance of our lives.

### **An envisioning**

As a vision and a dream, matriarchies have exercised the imagination of many seekers of more benevolent and reasonable alternatives. Even a cursory acquaintance with many so-called primitive contemporary societies as well as with archaeological sites and prehistoric artefacts lends credence to the historicity of matriarchies which is still denied by obdurate and fearful scholars.

By matriarchies I do not mean the matrilineal cultures recognised by all anthropologists. These groups, where they still exist, have been largely contaminated by the white man’s presence. They are used to justify the hunting theory of culture because they show a division of labour along sex lines even though anthropologist Margaret Mead has observed that when tribal men leave the settlement for the ostensible purpose of hunting, they end up more often than not under a tree shooting

<sup>25</sup> *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*, G. & C. Merriam Company, Springfield, Massachusetts 1967.

<sup>26</sup> This date is conservative since there are structures on lower levels yet to be excavated which point to more archaic times. See James Mellaart, *Catal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia*, McGraw Hill, New York 1967.

<sup>27</sup> Roger M. Keesing and Felix M. Keesing, *New Perspectives in Cultural Anthropology*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York 1971, p. 97.

nothing more than the breeze<sup>28</sup>. Robert Graves caricatured matriarchies as the state in which “women were the dominant sex and men their frightened victims”<sup>29</sup>. Most probably, the notion of dominance itself rose with the establishment of the supremacy of males as lords of the household. In a genuine matriarchy women are the makers of major decisions in all spheres of activity, not merely as determiners of descent, nor as cooks, nor victims of constant pregnancies.

The existence of matriarchies throughout the world indicates that different groups of people at the same time can organise around different human experiences and values and develop divergent cultures. In the distant past, warmongers seem to have lived near more peaceful people whom they eventually swallowed in warfare. Matriarchies most likely suffered this fate.

Specifically, one species of *Australopithecus* disappeared some 500,000 years ago and the Neanderthals vanished between 10,000 and 13,000 years ago. Scientists accept the view that both were exterminated by their violent relatives (Cro-Magnons) who had a superior technology. Carl Sagan speculates that the brains of Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons – the two branches of *Homo sapiens* – evolved along different lines, which led the superior Cro-Magnon “to destroy utterly our husky and intelligent cousins”<sup>30</sup>. John Pfeiffer states that the Neanderthals “had no chance against these people and these institutions”<sup>31</sup>.

As their burial sites and animal cults suggest, the Neanderthals possessed a high degree of religious consciousness. They had a culture advanced enough to have produced many of the famous animal cave paintings in Spain and Southern France. Some say that they were not killed by wars but as a result of being “too specialised”, that is, too well adapted biologically and behaviourally to the harsh climate of ice-gripped Europe to survive in warmer weather<sup>32</sup>. Others suggest that since *sapiens Neanderthalis* occupied most of the world, they survived and continued to evolve whenever climatic conditions allowed. In some cases, they even “married” into tribes of *sapiens sapiens* (Cro-Magnons), especially in the Near East<sup>33</sup>.

Reality is in the mind’s eye. I like to think of Neanderthals as the originators of those matriarchal traditions that persisted so strongly through the Middle East into historical times and which make it reasonable to speculate that the physical, psychological and social developments attributed to man’s profession, hunting, could easily have developed from woman’s profession, gathering. Instead of weapons, many artefacts of our remote past could as easily have been ingenious edible-root diggers and mashers, nut crackers, slicers, implements to gather wood for the hearth and shelter.

<sup>28</sup> Margaret Mead, lecture delivered at Regis College, Weston, Massachusetts 1972.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, vol. I, Penguin Books Inc., Baltimore Maryland 1955; Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1969, 1.1.

<sup>30</sup> Carl Sagan, *The Dragons of Eden: Speculations on the Evolution of Human Intelligence*, Random House, New York 1977; Hodder & Stoughton, London 1978, p. 107.

<sup>31</sup> Pfeiffer, *The Emergence of Man*, p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> Leakey and Lewin, *Origins*, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Fisher offers a fascinating review of this thought-provoking theory in *Woman’s Creation*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York 1979; Wildwood House, London 1980, pp. 132-134.

If a large brain is the result of exercise – thinking, imagining, communicating mind-stretching experiences – the deliberate gathering of food, whether this involved the sporadic capture and killing of small animals or not, is likely to have precipitated the development of the brain as well as hand dexterity. The acquisition and transmission of information about the edibility, the nutritional and medicinal properties of plants combined with information about their location and growth habits, require an active use of memory, intelligence, language, and the manufacture of *tools* (utensils) to gather, handle, store and prepare them.

Social cohesiveness is more likely to have arisen from the mother-infant bond and the need both to protect and feed the young than from male bonding developed on occasional hunting trips into the woods. Collective nurturing and the play element involved in the caring of the young is likely to create a language rich in emotional nuances and a vocabulary far more imaginative, complex, and affective than the language derived from the hunt, in which there is no trust, no affection, only thrill. The gathering and preparing of food as well as the care of infants require an infinity of observations and judgments crucial to wellbeing. With time to think and time to dream I see thoughts of connectedness gradually emerging that would form the creation stories that later would become ritualised into worship. Practical and aesthetic concerns such as the weaving of cloth, blending of colours and shaping of matter (day, wood, stone) would turn into technology and art. I see congeniality and sharing. It is not coincidental that the word “company” means the eating of bread together (Latin: *com pane*, with bread). If sharing meat had been as vital as some scholars would have us think, we would have a word to reflect that reality. The sharing of meat comes to us associated with sacrifice, not company.

There are many examples of the patriarchal bias in interpretations of archaeological/anthropological finds. When confronted with piles of animal bones such as those of elephants, horses, rhinos, and so on, which died 300,000 years ago in what used to be a swamp in Torralba, Spain, I would think of the flight of animals before a natural forest fire, and their tragic death there, mired, unable to escape. I would *not* think of “spectacular hunting expeditions” or of men lighting fires in the bush to “stampede their prey”. The fact that the site of this massive animal death also contains “acheulian tools” (hand axes that look like grain thrashers) suggests that humans lived there, not necessarily that men drove these animals to the swamp, killed them, and ran on abandoning their “tools”.

The remains of some fifty elephants at Ambrona, Spain, could be a communal grave, since elephants feeling death impending travel long distances to die where other elephants have died and others still will come to die. Or again, a natural disaster could have killed the herd all at once. It takes a hunting mentality to imagine that men slaughtered fifty elephants at one time. To construct an analogy with today’s pygmies who delight in elephant hunts is bound to be vitiated by the fact that today’s pygmies have had contact with the white man’s greed for ivory. Knowing the price he will pay for tusks certainly is part of that delight. Moreover, comparisons between contemporary hunter-gatherer tribes and tribes of *Homo erectus* living 300,000 years ago do not take into account the changes that occur with the passing of time. Pygmy culture today is different from what it was in the past.

Another case in point is the hut in Soviet Moldavia, one wall of which is built of mammoth skulls, tusks and shoulder blades. These bony remnants are just as likely to have been supplied by natural events as by mass hunting, the current popular explanation. As the Ice Age progressed, there were movements of glaciers, melting and freezing over of ice sheets, and changes in the flora and fauna everywhere, particularly around the ice sheets. The mammoth did not survive the warming of climates and the changes in vegetation. It is plausible that a band of humans would chance upon a few dead mammoths already decayed and would thus take advantage of the bones, using them as raw material to build their shelters. This does not mean that men did not hunt mammoths – they too had to keep warm, they too had to eat during those turbulent times. It means simply that to kill for survival does not entail mass slaughter.

I like to think of women as movers of culture. In Western culture, we are traditionally said to be conservative, meaning opposed to progress. In general we oppose all that is destructive of us and what we love. We do not believe the rationalisations given us by those who see gain in destruction. For example, we oppose territorial expansion because it means the death of sons, the rape of daughters, the wounding of land, the general abuse of those not directly involved in combat (the civilians), and general destruction of all that is dear to us. Thus women are not seen as playing an important role in the evolutionary path that led the hominids forward into humanhood. We are not opposed to progress as such, but our notion of progress is more ecological, therefore conservative in the sense used today by conservationists. Whenever we have succeeded in keeping a sense of our-selves as separate and different from the cultural model of femininity, whenever we have been able to assert our values and nonconformity without feeling that we are melting into nothingness, we have been, and are, basically and universally lovers of life. And it is this loving I see as prime mover of culture.

The kind of alternative theorising I have done here concerning our remote past is not only appealing and plausible, it is vital. It is vital because in the process of women imagining our own history lies the possibility of discovering our own values, and in those values lies our hope for the future.

### **Man's oldest profession**

I have no sympathy for hunters. Their habit repels me as being senselessly brutal. Their language embarrasses me as sounding piteously immature. They remind me of irresponsible little boys driven to savagery out of boredom, a boredom so desperate that relief comes only from the thrill of hunting that culminates in the kill. Quite simply, hunters need to be “turned on” to life. One of them expressed his inability to respond to nature unless he controlled/killed it when he said to me, “Walking in the woods doesn't turn me on unless there's a purpose to it. Marking trees. Shooting deer. That's really living”. This middle-aged man, well-off, respectable-looking, and soft-spoken, makes a living from house-hunting, that is, from real estate, which he finds very dull. Hunting becomes the fix that enables the hunter to bear the humdrum of his unfeeling existence as a cog in the wheel of culture.

However my purpose is not to understand hunters but to situate hunting in the culture that spawned it. Hunting is the *modus operandi* of patriarchal societies on all levels of life – to support one level is to support them all. However innocuous the language may sound – we hunt everything from houses to jobs to heads – it reveals a cultural mentality so accustomed to predation that it horrifies only when it threatens to kill us all, as in the case of nuclear weapons. Underlying all this hunting is a mechanism that identifies/names the prey, stalks it, competes for it, and is intent on getting the first shot at it. This is blatantly done when the prey is named woman<sup>34</sup>, animal, or land but it extends to whatever phobia happens to seize and obsess a nation, whether this be another nation or a race other than that of power-holding groups. Nature has been blamed for being either seductive (and dangerous) or indifferent to man. Siren-like, she beckons and invites hooks and guns in the same way women are said to lure men and ask for rape. Or, like the cold, uncaring “bitch”; nature does not respond to man’s plight and must therefore be punished. Seduction and indifference are in the mind of the beholder who projects them in order to rationalise his acts and the rationalisation works because the culture approves it.

We know that women want to be raped as much as deer and lions want to be shot and the earth, sea, and skies are asking to be gouged, polluted, and probed. But ever since God said we had all been created to submit to man’s will, it has been legitimate to objectify women, animals, and nature, attributing to them characteristics and behaviors which say a great deal about the patriarch’s state of mind and nothing about us.

### **Sadomasochism: the “insurmountable problem”**

To perceive something alive as an object is part of the sadomasochistic syndrome Pulitzer prize winner Ernest Becker sees as the creative and heroic solution to the “insurmountable problem” life itself presents to man. In *The Denial of Death*, Becker names “the problem” as nothing more than having to live with a body subject to the natural laws of limitation and death. Thus, he is forced to live in terror of meaninglessness and compelled repeatedly to perform acts of brutality in order to survive. Those who cannot accept to be a part of the life-cycle must live in the realm of sadomasochistic fantasy and seek self-actualization in violence. Blaming nature for one’s limitations (one’s animality) is like blaming mother for being born and hating both for one’s inability to cope with life. Thus Becker projects this hatred on to nature by calling it callously unconcerned, “even viciously antagonistic to human meanings”, and not surprisingly finds a callously vicious solution in flagrant

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<sup>34</sup> The predictable inclusion of women in the ranks of man’s rightful prey is easily seen in the fur industry which is keen on maintaining the connection between hunting, fur animals and women. Its advertisements degrade women because they invariably fuse animals and women in the same identity of prey, an identity that appeals to the hunter in man and the victim in woman. These ads tell the woman to take the bait (the fur coat) that will apparently bring the man to her feet. In reality she is the prey being brought down. She and the fur animal – one “alive” and the other dead – are one and the same. After looking at dozens of these images it became obvious to me that the advertisers address not so much the woman who is lured into wearing the fur as the man whose money will buy it. Even when man does not actually hunt animals, his success is still reflected in the kill.

perverse acts against life which “compel nature to defer” and raise him above it. Indeed *this* is the essence of hunting. It is an exercise of power on the part of one who feels overwhelmed, frightened and frightened and it explains the pathetic urge to kill anything bold enough to be alive.

The real significance of a philosophy such as Becker’s is that it articulates the sadomasochism to be found in every aspect of a culture that leads us shamelessly to exploit the body of nature and name that exploitation “transcendence”, “progress”. (It is interesting that Becker received a national award and that many critics praised his “courageous” exploration of man’s existential dilemma, which was simply an exacerbation of the old body/mind dualism.) A tradition that encourages us to free our bodies from the limitations of nature is one that plucks us from the web of life, leaving us stranded and longing for the very biophilic connections we are taught to repudiate. Blind to the inherent contradictions and delusions, man splits reality into discrete, self-contained and antagonistic categories – nature/culture, body/mind, emotional reason – claims them all and calls himself healthy, whole and sound of mind. He is unruffled about the fact that he “loves” animals, joins conservation societies, rescues abandoned dogs and cats and *at the same time* sinks hooks into fish and fires bullets into “game”, shoots rodents who occasionally munch vegetables in his backyard, condones the clubbing of baby seals to death, and the infliction of injury and excruciating pain on laboratory animals, hits rabbits, squirrels, hedgehogs, skunks, opossums by the thousands as they cross his highways, leaving them to their fate and, in an all-out war against “the enemies of mankind”, seeks to exterminate all manner of insects and “lesser” life forms that threaten his comfort and possessions. It is the rare man who sees these acts as contradictions. He is even more rare who experiences them as conflicts. Such contradiction and delusion are cornerstones of the romantic tradition – a tradition which urbanely conveys sadomasochism into the realm of “normal” human feelings and relationships by masking the brutality of “love” grounded in the objectification of the “love object”.

### **The hunt romanticised**

In simple terms, romanticism is a function of the idealisation process whereby brown paper is turned into holiday wrapping. A romantic removes the “love object” from the reality of its being to the secret places of his mind and establishes a relationship of power/domination over it. There can be no reciprocity, no element of mutuality between the romantic lover and the “love object”. The quest (chase) is all that matters as it provides a heightened sense of being through the exercise of power. Romantics engage in sadomasochistic games with their victims played against a background of obstacles, potentially threatening situations, and grandiose schemes. Since one cannot sustain the frenzy of feeling resulting from pursuit of an ideal – by definition, inaccessible – the romantic game point is death. The hunt, as epitomised in the idealisation of the chase, of the kill, of the hunter and of his victim, is the mainstay of romanticism.

Romantic images of the hunter and the hunt abound in the arts and the media. An example of the unexamined contradictions and delusions that sustain such romanticisations can be seen in the words of the eminent art historian Sir Kenneth

Clark, who described the medieval institution of the hunt in *Animals and Men*, a work commissioned for the benefit of the World Wildlife Fund.

Hunting was considered a festive occasion, in which the pursuit and death of a few animals was of little importance compared to the pleasure it gave to a quantity of human beings, and there arose the much quoted paradox that hunters are the only men who really love animals<sup>35</sup>.

Hunting – festive – pursuit – death – animals – pleasure – human beings – hunters – love. Certainly an odd string of associations that would confound a reader with a life-loving mentality. Elsewhere in the book appears a representation of Paolo Uccello's painting, *Hunt in the Forest*, which depicts deer surrounded by placid-looking men with weapons, dogs and horses, about to pounce upon the deer from all sides. (This image is echoed in a scene in Ingmar Bergman's film *The Virgin Spring* in which a young girl blended with the landscape in much the same way as Uccello's deer and, as in Uccello's painting, was unaware of the two repulsive men who were lying in wait in the thicket before attacking and raping her.) According to Clark, in Uccello's painting "there is no hint of brutality or death ... Here the union of man and nature comes curiously close to the image of the Golden Age"<sup>36</sup>. Through the lens of the romantic the tension of the brutality about to overwhelm the deer is lost as we are asked to see instead images of man's communing with nature and the harmony of a Golden Age.

Clark goes on to comment on a painting by Lukas Cranach in which animals are being massacred a few feet away from a family enjoying an outing on the river, the members of which – including the child's pet dog – are all oblivious to it. The contrast between the brutality of the hunt and the frivolous indifference of the well-to-do boaters enjoying private violin music should increase the horror toward hunters and boaters alike. (One could compare *this* image with a scene in the film *Cabaret*, in which a group of bourgeois Germans complacently enjoy a lavish meal while Nazis are harassing and viciously terrorising people in the street nearby.) However, to Clark, "Up to modern times it was conventional to enjoy it [the chase] and a spectacle such as that depicted by Lukas Cranach would have given nothing but pleasure to most normal men and women"<sup>37</sup>. Here brutality as a norm is excused as something of the past and, in the name of art, is disconnected from the overall pattern of destructiveness that pervades this culture. The norm determines the normality of men and women. When the norm is destructive, normal men and women destroy whether they engage in the hunt, as Cranach's hunters, or, like his boaters, "enjoy" themselves while violence is going on around them, or, like the viewers to whom Clark alludes, take pleasure from Cranach's spectacle.

The efforts of modern man to rationalise the contradictions and delusions surrounding the hunt and the hunter extend to the romanticised images be fashions of primitive man as the archetypal hunter with the hunt as the *sine qua non* of his existence. These images are inferred, in part, from primitive cave paintings which

<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Animals and Men*, William Morrow, New York 1977; Thames & Hudson, London 1977, p. 57.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.



depict animal and human figures. Very different images of our [*sic*] remote past and pastimes occurred to me after regarding many textbook representations of the actual primitive portraits.

In primitive art, cave paintings portray a direct relationship between the artist and the animal as animal. In fact, the animal itself, not the hunt and not the hunter, is the focal point of cave art. In those rare instances in which the animal is represented as wounded, the “hunter” can be inferred but is not seen. In addition, the animal is drawn not as prey or victim, but as self-contained energy so unusually lifelike and beautiful that art historians agree in attributing deep religious motivation to the artists who drew them. The primitive artist who emerges for me from these cave paintings is one who is in tune with the *life* of the animal and whose spirituality en-souls/animates the visual representations<sup>38</sup>. In contrast, modern portraits of the archetypal hunter/hunt share one common characteristic: the animal is used as a projection screen for man’s repressed and thwarted feelings, that is, the animal symbolises something other than what it essentially is. It serves to highlight the hunter’s power, prestige, etc. It is invariably prey to the hunter who occupies centre stage. The animal is thoroughly objectified and brutality is presented as heroism.

In the main, these portraits run the gamut of vulgarity. For example, a supermarket in Waltham, Massachusetts, has a decorated wall above its meat department with three “painted” hunting scenes. An Eskimo spears a seal, a Native American is about to dispatch an arrow into a buffalo, and an African thrusts a javelin into a lion, next to the caption “Your violent struggle for food is over. On these premises is your happy hunting ground.” Underneath this mural, real and ordinary people buy “cuts” of meat dissociated from the animal and from the slaughterhouse (the “hunting ground”). The message conveyed by the caption is a lie. Food is a “struggle” created by over-population and consumerism rooted in an economy of waste. Thus the “violent struggle” for food is not over; it is either disguised or displaced. Disguised, in that the white man kills anonymously, behind the scenes. Displaced, in that the struggle is in the animal’s psyche unseen, unheard, and unspoken for. It must “live” through the brutal negation of its needs in pens too small. It is fed poisonous chemicals that deform its body as they accelerate its growth. In addition, for the food shopper, the “struggle” has shifted from physical to economic stress – people having to hunt jobs in order to afford the psychic pain of the animals they eat. Indeed, it is not just animal flesh that the shopper purchases in those plastic-wrapped packages but the psychic struggle of the once-living animal. Another particularly disturbing contradiction, with attendant delusions, blurred by romanticisation is the phenomenon of the artist-hunter, who kills then draws or paints his victims. The artist-hunter loves nature – birds, animals – but without the exchange, the mutuality that would indicate a perception of the other as a self. If there were such mutuality, there would be no such person as an artist-hunter. The lie and work of the Swedish naturalist Bruno Liljefors provide dear examples of the

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<sup>38</sup> We do not even know whether the artists were women or men, although most art historians refer to them in the masculine gender. In view of collective identity of tribal people, cave art is likely to be the result of collective work over several generations rather than the boasting of an individual hunter about the day’s kill.

neurosis underlying such “love” of nature. As a child, Liljefors is said to have lain awake at night devising “schemes for trapping birds, eager to hold and study them up close”. His first weapon was the bow and arrow, but, because he could not get close enough to his quarry he “inevitably graduated to the gun”. Still dissatisfied, he took up stone throwing and “as he skinned and mounted his triumphs, he drew and studied their anatomy”<sup>39</sup>. After describing Liljefors as an ardent lover of nature, Don R. Eckelberry speculates that Liljefors’ obsession with hunting “may have been psychologically rooted in admiration for the contest of power between the hunter and the hunted growing out of his childhood weaknesses”<sup>40</sup>. Regardless of the early personal experiences that may or may not have fed the obsession, it certainly is a strange admiration that seeks and triumphs in the death of the beloved<sup>41</sup>.

The reverse side of Liljefors’ killing problem is his identification with helpless animals. “He could ... be just as sentimental as those he criticised, nursing injured and orphaned animals and going out of his way to protect an imperiled nest with young. He was moved when a frightened fox cub crawled into his shirt for protection”<sup>42</sup>. This description provides clues to the sadomasochistic character of the artist-hunter and to the delusional mechanisms enabling one without conflict to perceive the self and be perceived by others as both a lover and killer of animals. Publication of romanticised renditions of the life and work of the artist-hunter by major conservation groups such as the Audubon Society provides the ultimate fiat and camouflage for the irreconcilable duality of love expressed by killing.

### **From the romantic to the real**

Hunters often pose as conservationists who love nature, giving rise to yet another contradiction comfortably entrenched in this culture. In point of fact, hunters do not love nature as such but rather how they feel in nature as they stalk: and kill her animals. Dependent for their thrills upon what nature “provides”, they therefore spend a considerable amount of money to ensure that conservation lands as well as fish and animal preserves are regularly stocked. They return compulsively to woods and lakes, rivers and fields, marshes and oceans, to live through the power of their rods and guns. When rigorously challenged as to the morality of their predilections, hunters commonly resort to rationalisations that disguise their self-interest as “concern” for animals and for other people. For example, “deer would starve to death if hunters did not cull the herds”, or “bears would cause too much damage if not kept in check by hunters”. The deer’s main natural predator is the wolf which hunters all

<sup>39</sup> Martha Hill, *Liljefors of Sweden: the Peerless eye*, in “Audubon”, LXXX, 5, September 1978, p. 81.

<sup>40</sup> Don R. Eckelberry, *Of animals and art*, in “Audubon”, LXXX, 5, September 1978, p. 105.

<sup>41</sup> I can still admire the bird paintings of J.J. Audubon and Bruno Liljefors; they are indeed beautiful. Then I think of the birds and animals freshly shot to enable the artist to reproduce their likenesses. The cost of my pleasure is too high. I am morally outraged with Martha Hill when she uncritically writes (*op. cit.*, p. 104) that “the paintings of John James Audubon, Wilhem Kuhnert, and Cari Rungius were enhanced by the detailed knowledge of morphology gained from freshly shot animals”. The lives of the animals so freshly shot were not enhanced by their killers’ romantic passion.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

but exterminated. As for marauding bears, it is human overpopulation and the “need” to industrialise that is causing an expansion of suburbia into the “wilderness”, taxing the earth and all that lives on it. Thousands of innocent wild animals are forced from their habitats and then blamed and exterminated for damage they cause to human settlements. The deer did well when it was left alone. So did the bear.

Perhaps from the animal’s point of view it is immaterial whether it is killed by the claws of a bear or by the bullet of a hunter. But it makes an enormous difference to the continuation and *quality* of life whether human beings kill like the bear or like the hunter. Bears do not kill gratuitously for “pleasure”, status, profit, power, masculinity. Hunters do. Bears kill because they have to eat what they kill in order to survive. The overwhelming majority of the 20.6 million “registered” hunters in the United States do not kill for survival. Bears kill the weak. Hunters take the biggest and the best. Bears give back to the earth. Hunters give back nothing.

After he had witnessed a moose hunt, Henry David Thoreau wrote:

This afternoon had suggested to me how base and coarse are the motives which commonly carry men into the wilderness. The explorers and lumberers generally are hirelings, paid so much a day for their labor, and as such they have no more love for wild nature than woodsawyers have for forests<sup>43</sup>.

Thoreau’s experience of that hunt brought home to him the uniqueness of life, the rare and beautiful quality that is felt only by participating in “the perfect success” of every part of nature. In other words, every part of nature is a gift in itself. For Thoreau the capacity to know the heart of the pine without cutting into it is to love the healing spirit of the wild without killing it. This contemplative, non-utilitarian, non-materialistic love of nature often passes as romantic because it is emotional and appears to ignore such realities of life as building houses and keeping warm. Thoreau’s own attempt at self-sufficiency – for which he had to cut timber – did not prevent him from participating as fully as he could in the mystery of the wild.

Participation in nature is in diametric opposition to the romantic appetite for nature epitomised in the hunt, an appetite which consumes the object of its love and which is insatiable because based upon a neurotic need for power and control. Participation in nature is based upon a recognition of the reality that nature exists of, for, and by herself; that she is ordered by principles and forces which defy manipulation and harnessing; and that understanding of nature flows from the experience of her and not from the experiment upon her, from being with, not being over her. Participation in nature joins the lover and the loved in regenerative, mutually sustaining cycles of living and dying.

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<sup>43</sup> Henry David Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., New York 1961, pp. 156-157.