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# Ecofeminism and Hunting<sup>1</sup>

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by

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*Abstract:* In many nations hunting is fostered by the government and protected as a valued tradition, but ecofeminist philosophy exposes hunting not as an honored tradition, but as part of a larger system of marginalization and oppression that harms both humans and non-humans. To demonstrate this point, Kemmerer elucidates dualism and hierarchy, and connections between sexism and speciesism (as interfacing oppressions), then debunks common hunting myths, including the myth of hunting is a tradition or sport, and also the myth that hunting is an economical form of sustenance, and the myths that hunters both fund and benefit the preservation of ecosystems and “wildlife.” Finally, with the most common hunting myths out of the way, Kemmerer demonstrates that an ecofeminist analysis better explains why hunting persists.

## Introduction

People in industrialized communities tend to put much weight on the importance of equality, justice, and individual lives even as they live in communities where various forms of marginalization and oppression are systemic, including sexism, ableism, racism, classism, favoring and privileging of the cisgendered, and speciesism. As part of this tendency toward inconsistency and hypocrisy, people in industrialized communities speak much of the value of life, about protecting the innocent and the vulnerable, while not only accepting but defending the practice of hunting-killing the innocent and the vulnerable for “sport,” sometimes carrying part or all of the dead home for a trophy or “food.” This inconsistency and hypocrisy are supported by a handful of widely accepted justifications that fail to withstand even casual scrutiny. In contrast, ecofeminist philosophy handily explains why those in industrialized communities (blindly) accept – and maintain – these inconsistencies.

## Ecofeminism: Dualism, Denigration, and Interfacing Oppressions

Every way of viewing the world comes with certain core assertions and a measure of resistance to alternative views. Albert Einstein argued that civilizations are a direct result of thought patterns and will not/cannot change if we do not change how

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we think (Kemp. S. n.p.). How we look at the world – our worldview – establishes how we live. Worldviews are “an ever-changing complex of beliefs, values, feelings, desires, and expectations that affect the way a person sees the world and how that person feels about things in the world” (Marietta 8). Although critical in shaping how we view ourselves in relation to the world around us, and how we behave, we are generally completely unaware of our worldview, let alone those of others (Marietta 8). Though ecofeminists are many and varied, a fair number of ecofeminists locate the source of a tendency toward violence and oppression in the Greco-diaspora (Europeans who trace their culture back to Ancient Greece, including at least some colonized lands such as those of the Americas and Oceania) in binaries or dualistic opposites. Françoise d’Eaubonne coined the term “ecofeminism” in 1974, introducing a theory that connected the exploitation and degradation of the natural world with sexism. Across time, many ecofeminist writers and thinkers have extended the connection of oppressions from environment and women to connect marginalization and oppressions more broadly, often implicating the Greco-diaspora tendency toward a dualistic worldview.

*Dualism and Hierarchy*

It is instructive to compare dualistic thinking with a worldview of interconnection, a view that is much more common historically. A dualistic worldview holds that phenomenon are divided into two separate, distinct, mutually exclusive categories such as human/non-human, male/non-male, white/non-white, productive/unproductive, civilized/uncivilized, and abled/disabled.

<b>Prototype</b>	<b>Not Prototype</b>
Human	Not Human
Male	Not Male
White	Not White
Civilized	Not Civilized
Mind/Rational	Not Mind/Irrational
Spirit	Not Spirit
Productive	Not Productive
Settled Land	Not Settled Land
Heterosexual	Not Heterosexual
Abled	Not Abled
Fertile	Not Fertile
Young Womb	Not Young Womb

Dualistic Worldview. Note that civilized/non-civilized has two subsets, one of which is productive/non-productive, which also has a handful of subsets. (From *Oppressive Liberation*, Palgrave MacMillan 2023.)

In a dualistic worldview, “male” is envisioned as separate from and opposite to “non-male” (“white” to “non-white,” “civilized” to “non-civilized,” and so on). This

view shapes the universe into binaries, asserting that little to nothing of importance is equivalent across dualistic categories, thereby creating hierarchy – that which is viewed as prototypical is valued over that which is not viewed as prototypical. As a result, the non-prototypical are generally viewed (and values assessed) via their usefulness to the prototypical, and they are denigrated, objectified (viewed and treated as an object), marginalized, and exploited/oppressed by/in relation to that which is favored/prototypical. Descartes famously took this dualistic vision to its logical extreme, asserting that animals<sup>2</sup> were mindless and insentient while the human animal was the only rational, sentient being (Descartes 115). As a result, animal experimentation/vivisection began to be accepted, even though there was no anesthesia at the time. Among humans, this creates communities of discord where some hold power over others, and competition to climb the ladder of power, rather than cooperation for mutual benefit.

While dualism is foundational to Greco-diaspora cultures (and is present in many cultures due to the influence of Greco-diaspora culture), this view of the world is easily exposed as absurd. For example, male and female do not form a binary: There are a host of sex karyotypes other than XX and XY, including 45 X, 47 XXX, 48 XXXX, 49 XXXXX, 47 XYY, 47 XXY, 48 XXXY, 49 XXXXY, and 49 XXXYY (Callahan, 2009, 62). Sexuality is increasingly understood as fluid and complex, best graphed on a sliding scale. Nor do other binaries hold up to scrutiny:

- There are no “Black Humans” in opposition to “White Humans.” Anthropologists discovered the oldest human skeletal remains in Morocco indicating that all humans trace their ancestry back to Africa. Importantly, when humans emerged as an independent species, it appears that there were no geographical barriers inhibiting human movement between Africa, Europe, and Asia (MacEachern, 2012, 41-42).
- No one is fully abled or fully disabled when we consider memory, artistic abilities, personality, communication skills, social skills, genetic propensities, and bodily variations in eyesight, balance, genetic medical propensities, and so on.
- Humans are primates, mammals, animals, and part of nature – we cannot be separate from (let alone be opposite or better than) that which we are.

Despite the fact that dualisms are in fact a misconception, this view of the world not only persists, but is widespread, having traveled the world with the imperialistic Greco-diaspora. It is important to note that this worldview serves the interests of those who are empowered – (cisgendered, abled, dominant race, property owning men, and where speciesism is concerned, human beings more generally).

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<sup>2</sup> The word animal is a contraction of “any” and “animal,” pronounced as “any” and “mal.” Animal indicates all individuals from all species other than that of the speaker/author. In other words, if a human being uses this term, all species except *Homo sapiens* are indicated, but if a chimpanzee signs “animal,” they reference all species (including human beings) except chimpanzees. Using the term “animal” avoids the use of

- “animal” as if human beings were not animals;
- dualistic and alienating references such as “non” and “other”; and cumbersome terms such as nonhuman animals and other-than-human animals.

Ecofeminists observed that beings and things valued as prototypical are understood to be more closely associated with others envisioned as prototypical, while beings and things valued as nonprototypical are understood to be more closely associated with others in the less valued category. For example, nonprototypical humans are viewed as having less/fewer of attributes that are valued more highly (such as mind and reason) and as sharing more in common with all that is non-prototypical (“base” animality, irrationality, a lack of soul/spirit, and a lack of civilization, for example). Women, animals, and nature (all categorized as non-prototypical) are cast as similar in that they are viewed as less rational, less civilized, and as more distant from the Divine/Spirit.

It is therefore not surprising that, in some places and at some times, nonprototypical human beings have been exploited for vivisection/research, food, and so on. Because they are understood to be less rational, less civilized, and more distant from Spirit/God, the non-prototypical are viewed as in need of oversight and management from those who are civilized and endowed with reason. Casting them as lesser/lower justifies power-over the nonprototypical, making them subservient and placing them under the supervision of the prototypical – presumably for their own benefit and for the benefit of civilized society more generally. Greco-diaspora binaries, in categorizing the nonprototypical as more of matter/bodies and as under the supervision of those endowed with greater minds/spirit, placed them in a position of exploitation: their bodies can be exploited by the privileged/empowered/prototypical (able-bodied, cisgendered, property-owning, and in communities affected by racist Greco-diaspora views, white men) for food, sex, reproduction (sons/flesh), free labor, and pleasure/sport/entertainment.

A worldview of false value dualisms led to the nonprototypical being controlled and oppressed by (and for the benefit of) the prototypical, and to systemic oppressions through laws and institutions created, interpreted, and enforced by the prototypical that protect the prototypical/privileged. Meanwhile, these laws and institutions deny basic rights to the nonprototypical, whether the right to control one’s own body and reproduction, or the right to liberty – even life. Ecofeminists see the oppression of women, people of color, children, lesbians and gays, and the destruction of nature as linked and mutually reinforcing because of a system of domination that is legitimized and perpetuated by various institutions such as the state, the military, religion, the patriarchal family, and industrial capitalism (Heller 351).

#### *Denigration and Interfacing Oppressions*

Ecofeminist theorists, by exposing denigration, hierarchy, and oppressions that stem from false value dualisms, explain the systemic oppression of those envisioned as “non-prototypical” by those envisioned as “prototypical” (“Institutionalized” n.p.). In so doing, they explain how dualisms, entrenched in the Greco-diaspora worldview, have led to interfacing oppressions (sexism, racism, ableism, classism, heterosexism, nationalism, and so on) (Ferguson n.p.).

*Interfacing oppressions: Sexism and Specieism*

Understanding the Greco-diaspora worldview of false value dualisms offers a clearer view of the interconnected nature of sexism and speciesism. Dualism casts both women and animals as less rational and less civilized than men, alongside animals, nature, and all things physical. Both women and animals are categorized as non-prototypical, and men have marginalized, controlled, and exploited women and animals in similar ways for centuries. Women have been viewed and used as expendable companions who can rightly be exploited for labor (most often free labor in the home) and for their reproductive biology (especially to produce sons) (W. King n.p.; Myers and Ryan n.p.; McCurry n.p.), nursing milk (West and Knight 37), or to acquire a vagina for their pleasure (Shpancer n.p.), including sex for military personnel (Thomas and Ralph n.p.) and sex for consumption/sale/profit (trafficking). Animals are similarly cast as exploitable for labor and for their reproductive biology (offspring and nursing milk for consumption/sale/profit/sport). This interface of sexism and speciesism (labor, bodies, and reproductive organs viewed as exploitable by and on behalf of the prototypical) is graphically illustrated in advertisements/images that juxtapose the bodies of young (fertile) women with those of female farmed animals (widely viewed as available for reproductive exploitation) (Adams 109-116). These images, which are both an expression of and reinforcement for hierarchy and oppression, invite consumption/exploitation/violation of women and farmed animals.



Sexualized/exploitable cow-woman and woman-cow. (From *Oppressive Liberation*, Palgrave McMillan 2023.)



Sexualized/exploitable pig-woman. (From *Oppressive Liberation*, Palgrave McMillan 2023.)

Here women and pigs/cows (along with the rest of the animal world) are presented as one and the same, and both are cast as ignorant/irrational bodies lacking in mind/spirit/civilization. Note that both of the second set of images have a pig's head – the human head is viewed as the locus of mind and reason – while the rest of the body is feminized and sexualized (denigrated as non-civilized and not-mind/reason). Such images reinforce dualistic associations that align females with animals, conveying the idea that both women and pigs are rightly controlled, manipulated, and exploited by (rational) men, and that (superior) men are entitled to “a piece of flesh” – whether pig-flesh or woman-flesh.

The English language of the Greco-diaspora simultaneously reflects and perpetuates this conflation and objectification of animals and women. For example, “cow” refers to both bovines and women. A cow might also be referenced as “beef” and a sow “bacon” – not as individuals but as pieces of their own cut up flesh prepared for consumption by others. A piece of a chicken's or fish's body is commonly referenced as “chicken” or “fish” – again, as if they were no more than an exploitable piece of their destroyed bodies (Dunayer 138-40).

Similarly, women and girls might be referenced as “pieces of meat,” “pussy,” “ass,” “a lay,” or as “cunt,” “sow,” “cow,” or “hen” (Dunayer 157-67) – disembodied, objectified, sexualized, animalized. Again, all things non-prototypical are viewed as interrelated so that negativity toward one non-prototypical category mingles with negativity toward others: women are animalized, animals are feminized, and both are sexualized.

In the food industry, all are exploited and suffer accordingly – all are slaughtered while young. Female animals suffer at an interface of oppression – they are denigrated and exploited as animals and as females, and so they suffer physically and psychologically both longer and in uniquely painful ways. This is evident in the breeding of animals for “science” and for “food” – sexual organs (vaginas, wombs, reproductive eggs, and mammary glands, in particular) are systematically exploited for profit/consumption.

In the egg industry, for example, shortly after hatching, male chicks are tossed into large garbage bins to suffocate or are chucked into a chopper to be ground up. In contrast, females are kept alive for nearly three months. As chicks, their beaks are seared off (without anesthesia) and they are soon placed in extremely crowded and barren wire cages, where every natural urge is thwarted. Finally, as very young adults, they are tossed into the chopper or sent to slaughter. While neither fate (male or female chicken) is to be celebrated, a quicker death is likely to seem preferable, rather than three months of misery before the same fate.

Similarly, male bovines born into the dairy industry are slaughtered just after birth or within six months of birth while female bovines are exploited for reproduction for five or six years. Their nerve-riddled horns are cauterized without anesthesia and as soon as they are sexually mature, cows are impregnated. A little more than 9 months later, after giving birth, they are immediately robbed of their newborns and then subject to perpetual milking – usually two or three times a day. This process (impregnation, theft of newborns, perpetual milking) is repeated until they are “spent” (milk production drops), at which time they are sent to slaughter.

	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>“Production”</b>	<b>Sufferings Unique to Females</b>
<b>Bo- vines in the Dairy Industry</b>	Males are a byproduct, used for flesh—alive from less than one day to about six months.	Females are alive for six years ( <b>7 times as long as males</b> ). (Female calves not exploited for dairy are slaughtered along with male calves.)	Five calves (in five years) and 18 tons of milk—more than six times the norm in 1935 (S. King n.p.). Dairy cows in the U.S. produce nearly 8 gallons of milk a day; without hormones and timed, forced pregnancies, they would produce about one gallon/day (enough for one calf) (“About Dairy Cows” n.p.).	“Rape racks” (forced impregnations), mastitis (udder infections), a diet of hormones that manipulate lactation, young taken, reaching a point of being “spent” from forced over-production, being sent to slaughter as a young adult, becoming “downers”—exhausted to the point where they cannot stand or walk and are dragged to their deaths.
<b>Pigs (Flesh Industry)</b>	Male are alive for six months then sent to slaughter	Females are alive for six years ( <b>12 times as long as males</b> )	120 piglets before slaughter. (Feral hogs naturally produce about 35 piglets in their lifetime.) (“Feral” n.p.)	At sexual maturity, for the rest of their lives, repeatedly impregnated and confined in gestation and then farrowing crates, which prevent almost all natural behaviors.
<b>Hens in the Egg Industry</b>	Males are alive for less than one day.	Female are alive for 1.5 years ( <b>12 times as long as males</b> ).	300 eggs (15 times the normal count of their ancestors, wild junglefowl) (Davis 49).	Just before sexual maturity, confined in battery cages for the rest of their lives, preventing almost all natural behaviors.

Comparison of the exploitation of female and male farmed animals. (From *Oppressive Liberation*, Palgrave MacMillan 2023.)

For hundreds of years, an official union called marriage has granted a man “legal license to his wife’s sexual and reproductive services” as her husband (“Husbandry” n.p.). Similarly, “animal husbandry” grants “owners” legal license to exploit the sexual and reproductive services of animals (“Husbandry” n.p.). Women and other female animals can be controlled and exploited by and for those who are comparatively empowered, and both are devalued as they age – when they move beyond their reproductive years (they don’t “put out”).

Though it is generally illegal to overtly kill women in contemporary societies, physical exploitation, even unto death, affects both female human beings and females of other species. Importantly, incidences of rape/murder almost invariably entail a man raping/killing a woman, not the other way around. Most women who are murdered are killed by men who have been granted “husbandry” over those they kill. For example, the now illegal but ongoing problem of “bride-burning” in India

allows a man to eliminate his first wife and then collect a dowry for a second (or third or fourth) wife. Meanwhile, every “month, an average of 70 women in the U.S. are shot and killed by an intimate partner” (“The Silent Epidemic” n.p.). And in states and nations where abortion is illegal, women die in childbirth because they cannot attain an abortion – women’s reproductive capacity can be exploited for childbirth even unto death.

### Hunting: Dualism and Denigration

Ecofeminist philosophy observes that false value dualisms in the Greco-diaspora “other” and denigrate individuals and nature, leading to their exploitation, exposing a root cause of interfacing oppressions. In turn, they have shed light on why humans frequently assert a common belief that life is precious while simultaneously demonstrating that we find life utterly expendable – the lives of those deemed lowest in the hierarchy – even for the most paltry of reasons, such as profit and pleasure. We exploit animals as “bacon” and “chicken,” as petri dishes and entertainment, and for “sport” (racing, fishing, television, hunting, and hobby farming).

Ecofeminism provides an explanation for this inconsistency – we have a dualistic worldview (of which we are generally unaware) that others, denigrates, and thereby permits the exploitation of those cast as lower/lesser/other. As a result, though humans almost invariably state that they value life and feel strongly about protecting the lives of the vulnerable and the innocent, they tolerate and often verbally defend hunting. Importantly, those who make and enforce the rules have a personal stake in maintaining the status quo, and so there are a plethora of common justifications/rationalizations, propagated by government “wildlife” agencies, that defend and support hunting. For example, citizens might be told on websites and by rangers that hunting is a treasured and important (and therefore protected) tradition/sport, that hunting funds the protection of ecosystems/animals,<sup>3</sup> and that hunting is good for animals. But like all rationalizations posed to defend of hypocrisy, a closer look exposes these justifications/rationalizations as utterly vacuous and patently false.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The term “wildlife” juxtaposes “wild” against tamed/conquered animals, normalizing domestication (Kheel, *Nature Ethics* 112, 226, 231), and so I use “free-ranging” or “free-roaming” rather than “wildlife” or “wild animal.”

<sup>4</sup> Laws presented in this portion of the essay focuses on the United States. For similar laws, policies, and practices in other nations (particularly Europe), here are some starters: Decline in hunting—Italy, violence against partners [https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/maria-caspani/domestic-violence-italy\\_b\\_4431572.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/maria-caspani/domestic-violence-italy_b_4431572.html); decline in hunters in Italy, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/879823/share-of-individuals-practicing-hunting-in-italy/>, also covers Germany, U.K, and U.S., France <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1232759/number-validated-hunting-licenses-france/>; Germany (shows parallel with U.S. regarding hunters as elite, expense of hunting, decline in hunting, “old boys network,” and so on), also mentions UK and U.S. <https://www.dw.com/en/hunting-in-germany-stealthily-gains-in-popularity/a-2335758>; Italy, concerns over hunting, myths continued <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2009/mar/20/hunting-laws-italy>; historic analysis of hunting in Europe <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20761974>; violence connections, <https://nationallinkcoalition.org/>, in general, <https://national-linkcoalition.org/faqs/what-is-the-link>, hunting in Australia, <https://www.all-creatures.org/strategies/strategies-human-violence-hunting.html> and the main article is here, <file:///C:/Users/n64g461/Desktop/hunting-and-human-violence.pdf>; and the final chapter of *Eating Earth* (Kemmerer, 2015).



*False: Hunting is Protected as Tradition/Sport/Affordable Sustenance*

Many argue that hunting is a tradition, that people have hunted since time began, and that this history and practice legitimizes hunting. Of course, having done something over an extended period of time in no way justifies continuing to do so. Traditions like bride-burning, head-hunting, and cannibalism are no longer practiced – are, in fact, illegal (and viewed as immoral) across communities.

While traditions are often rightly left behind, this begs the question as to whether or not contemporary hunting is a tradition. Traditions entail time-honored methods accompanied by a mind-set or belief system. Traditionally, hunting was a means of securing food and was the responsibility of a breadwinner. Those who hunted did so with the understanding that what they were doing was vital to their well-being and/or survival. Today, in industrialized nations, “hunting is no longer motivated by hunger” or any need for flesh as sustenance (Robertson 85). Importantly, eating animal products is now widely recognized as completely unnecessary and harmful: Consumption of eggs dairy and eggs are linked with the largest killers in industrialized nations, particularly heart disease and cancers). Moreover, hunting is expensive in comparison with other ways of securing food (*Eating Earth* 121-125). Hunters sometimes argue that hunting is a sport. Cruelty is defined as “disposed to inflict pain or suffering”; a cruel act causes or is conducive “to injury, grief, or pain” (“Cruel” n.p.). Hunting is cruel. Even in light of the lobbying of gun industries, why does this “sport” persist?

Defenders note that this sport grants time with family and friends and provides “closeness with nature.” But a sport that terrorizes and destroys the vulnerable and the innocent conflicts with common, core human ethics. Moreover, this justification exposes the fact that hunting is no longer a tradition – a way of securing food in the belief that such food is a vital contribution to self/family/community wellbeing. Attempting to reconnect with nature by stalking and killing the innocents who live there does not provide a sound justification for hunting: it is impossible to gain closeness with that which we dominate and destroy – “just as the rapist does not achieve genuine intimacy through rape,... hunters do not achieve genuine intimacy with the animal that they kill (Kheel, “The Killing” 39). However, gardening (including community gardens) *does* come to mind. Creating, tending, harvesting, and preparing vegetables, grains, legumes, and fruits offers the opportunity for shared time with family and friends, most of which is spent outdoors interacting with the natural world. Also of relevance, gardening is much less expensive than hunting, and the yield, while not certain, is considerably more dependable.

*False: Hunters Fund Preservation of Ecosystems/Animals*

In industrialized nations, government programs tend to align with and support hunters and hunting because hunters and hunting once provided essential funds for protecting and maintaining hunted species and their homes on behalf of hunters.

The history of the alliance between hunters and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is instructive.<sup>5</sup> By 1937, government intervention was needed to save hunter target species from further extirpations and extinctions, so the “Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act,” commonly called the “Pittman-Robertson Act” (P-R),<sup>6</sup> was established. This act explicitly required “those who use the resource . . . pay for its care and maintenance” (“About the B & C Club” n.p.). The P-R Act placed an 11 percent excise tax on rifle, shotgun, and ammunition sales, creating a fund for government agencies to manipulate wildlife to reestablish, maintain, and ultimately increase/restore hunter target species.

The P-R Act required states to match grant funds with at least one dollar for every three federal dollars received so that states selling more guns received more P-R monies and have more funds available for wildlife manipulation. This ties the interests of government wildlife agencies to both hunters and firearms industries. Naturally, as hunting has become more and more of a pastime and less and less necessary for sustenance, P-R revenues have declined; the Pittman-Robertson Act was amended in 1970 to add a 10 percent tax on pistols and revolvers (and archery equipment). This further tied U.S. government wildlife agencies to the firearms industry – and radically altered *who* pays the P-R tax. In the contemporary United States, research suggests that less than one third of the population owns guns and only four percent of citizens hunt (Moore n.p.; Parker *et al* n.p.). The most commonly stated reason for keeping a gun is *personal protection* – and the most common gun kept is a *pistol or revolver* (Schaffer n.p.; “Guns.” n.p.). In a 2021 Gallop pole, 90 percent of gun-owning respondents indicated that they kept guns for personal protection; at 70 percent, the second most common reason for owning a gun was target shooting (“Guns”, n.p.). This is yet more true for women. An article providing many reasons why women “are the fastest-growing demographic of gun owners”, hunting is not even mentioned (Maddox n.p.). Millions of people (increasingly, women who feel marginalized to such an extent that they buy guns for protection) paid the P-R tax, thereby funding the manipulation of free-ranging animals on behalf of hunters, who are largely white men. This despite the fact that they may never hunt and perhaps despise hunting. Even guns purchased by those who have a strong moral objection to hunting support the P-R tax. Given that less than 4 percent of U.S. citizens hunt, and given that Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) monies used on behalf of hunters are now drawn largely from those who carry handguns for personal protection, government wildlife agencies *misappropriate* P-R funds by manipulating species on behalf of hunters. And they are dishonest in claiming that hunters are the ones who fund “conservation” (wildlife manipulation on behalf of hunters).

Citizens continue to believe that hunters are the primary source of funding for the protection of ecosystems and free-ranging animals even as hunter numbers continue

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<sup>5</sup> Here I specifically focus on the United States, where I live and work. I have been told (many times) that other nations are similar with regard to government agencies and hunting/fishing. Please see footnote 4 for information on this phenomenon in other nations.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the Pittman-Robertson Act, and for a link to the document, see <https://www.animal-law.info/article/american-wildlife-law-introduction>.

to decline.<sup>7</sup> Despite the government's investment of tax dollars into hunter recruitment programs (many of which target women and children), the average age of a hunter "keeps inching up" (Heffernan 25). Today, hunters constitute less than 4% of the population (Moore n.p.). Love for the outdoors is now much more commonly expressed in hiking, jogging, birdwatching, canoeing, or just taking a weekend walk in a local park; "literally, figuratively and statistically, hunting is a dying sport" (Robertson 153).

It is unlikely that an informed majority in any contemporary Greco-diaspora nation would support the use of government funds gathered from those who do not hunt (the vast majority) to manipulate wildlife and ecosystems on behalf of hunters (a tiny minority). Were the interests of hunters not interconnected with the gun industry, empowered and motivated by profit, this would likely change. Today, the persistent alignment of government agencies with hunting interests and the firearms industries is not only unsustainable, but constitutes a gross misappropriation of public funds and a breach of public trust. Taxing walking boots, binoculars, backpacks, boats, climbing gear, tents, skis, cameras, parkas – and ever so much more – would fund the preservation of animals and habitat much more readily, and would do so on behalf of the majority.

#### *False: Hunting Helps Ecosystems/Animals*

Given that government "wildlife" agencies – entrusted with protecting and preserving ecosystems and species on behalf of the public – have long been aligned with hunters, it should come as no surprise that those who run these agencies continue to assert that shooting wildlife is beneficial – even essential – for ecosystems and animals. Both hunters and government agencies (those working in these agencies tend to be hunters), continue to propagate the myth that deers (individuals, not a monolithic phenomenon) and coyotes would swarm the planet if hunters did not keep them in check. But how could this be true for both deers and coyotes – for both predator and prey? I learned in grade school that, left to their own devices, the numbers of predators and prey generally rise and fall cyclically in relation to one another, maintaining balance across time.

Those who defend hunting deer most of them do so as population control. But instead of policies designed to reduce numbers of deers, as we would reasonably expect if the goal were to prevent overpopulation, government agencies restrict hunting to autumn, when young have been raised, and "manipulate the ratios of bucks to does" through hunting licenses "in an attempt to yield the maximum number" of hunter target species (Yarrow n.p.): Sex ratios of the hunted are "skewed" to kill more males because only one buck is needed to bring young to a host of does (Yarrow n.p.; also "Why Are there" n.p.). If overpopulation of deers were a concern, and if that were why hunters pursued deers, then why would hunting licenses be designed to *enhance* deer populations? Obviously, it is disingenuous to argue that deers must be hunted *because they are overpopulated* while fostering policies designed to *produce* deers. Moreover, if deers (and those of other hunter target species) are at risk

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<sup>7</sup> Please see footnote 4 for more information on statistics on the decline of hunting in other nations.

of overpopulation, shouldn't government agencies stop eliminating (and start protecting) natural predators for these species? And wouldn't they support the use of immunocontraceptives, which have proven 80 percent effective in preventing pregnancy in does? As it turns out, hunters almost invariably resist the reintroduction of natural predators (Scully 66) *and* the use of immunocontraceptives – in preference for the ongoing cycle of false-inflation of hunter-target species followed by hunting.

While on the topic of the myth that hunters help the hunted, it is worth noting that, of the hundreds of millions of animals killed by hunters each year, only a small percent are deers – about 4 million in the United States (Gudorf 251). Most hunter-target species must be monitored and protected *because* they are hunter-target species, because hunting places these species at risk. In any event, those who argue that hunting provides much-needed population control never seem to notice the hypocrisy – the absurdity – of human beings gunning down other species because *we* find that *they* are overpopulated. Human population has now reached 8 billion. Do we really want to advocate shooting-to-kill as a reasonable and appropriate solution to the problem of an ever-growing, environmentally damaging species?

Finally, there is a myth that hunters benefit free-ranging animals by culling the weak, old, injured, and ill, thereby helping strengthen the species and ecosystems. As it turns out, hunters are more likely to be ableist and to disparage “a little puke buck” (Kemp, W. *et al* 28:52) in their quest for the buck with large antlers. Hunters write and speak of the rare and fortunate killing of a “wheelchair buck” that is blind or in some way “disabled” and can easily be killed – but is nonetheless desirable (not alive, but dead) because they have a large set of antlers (Kemp, W. *et al* 1:53:35).

Hunters can only kill a very specific number of animals every year, and they intend their weapons to destroy the largest and most fit individuals they can find. Hunters thereby strip herds of their strongest members, and their strongest genes. “This sort of discriminatory culling-of-the-fittest runs counter to natural selection and is effectively triggering a reversal of evolution by giving the unfit and defective a better shot at passing on their genes” (Robertson 123).

### **Ecofeminist Analysis and Hunting**

Evidence does not support common myths explaining why people hunt and ought to continue hunting. In contrast, a handful of ecofeminist thinkers have provided a cogent analysis as to why hunting persists and is widely accepted – despite irrational and unjustified myths that support hunting, and despite this “sport” conflicting with core, common ethics.

According to ecofeminists who have explored and exposed dualisms, hunters and their communities hold a dualistic worldview whereby animals are denigrated as less rational, less civilized, and less about spirit/God than prototypical individuals, and they are thereby construed as exploitable by and for the interests and pleasures of the comparatively privileged and empowered-prototypical individuals. Ecofeminists who put forward this understanding of dualisms have helped readers to see that hunters do not hunt (and the larger community does not accept hunting) because humans have always hunted (farming and gathering were at the core of sustenance for most communities), or because hunting is a tradition or a legitimate sport (it is

not), or because hunting is the cheapest way to feed a family (it is not), or because hunters want to reconnect with nature (there are much more intuitive/successful ways to do so), or because they fund conservation or preservation (they do not), or on behalf of ecosystems and animals (both of which they damage/destroy). Hunting is just another version of marginalization and oppression, of exploitation of the disempowered by those who are empowered – of systemic oppression. In many dualistic Greco-diaspora communities, the “essence of manhood is the ability and willingness to destroy others” – others being the nonprototypical (Luke 87). *Hunters hunt because that is what they want to do and because they are empowered to do so.*

Property owning, privileged, empowered men long ago created laws and government institutions to protect their hunting interests. Ecofeminist philosophy regarding dualisms explains why hunting not only persists but is widely accepted in Greco-diaspora nations even though terrifying, wounding, and killing for pleasure is a brazen contradiction of common, foundational ethics, and despite the absence of any cogent justification for doing so.

Why does 4% of the population continue to willfully cause suffering and premature death to the vulnerable and innocent as a form of sport? The answer is simple. At least some contemporary hunters admit that they “wouldn’t do it if it wasn’t fun” (Kemp, W. *et al* 1:24:20; also see: Luke 88). And what do they find to be fun? Hunters take pleasure in entering the homes of those whom they then pursue, terrify, and wound/kill – the vulnerable and innocent who are unarmed and unaware that they have been conscripted into a “sport” where they are pursued and targeted in their homes by humans with deadly weapons. The only risk hunters generally face comes from self-injury and the possibility of being shot by another hunter. This is not a fair chase by any definition of the term “fair”.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Theodore Roosevelt, a U.S. Statesman of the well-fed elite who enjoyed hunting, described this “sport” as a means of channeling a man’s “virile impulses,” thereby helping to turn boys into gentleman. He presented hunting as a means to human ends that have nothing to do with food, ecosystems, or managing of free-ranging species. Roosevelt asserted that hunting helped young men transcend dangerous passions and he advocated for hunting as an important means of moderating the deadly urges of men. Roosevelt expresses a dualistic view whereby the interests and purposes of the elite men of his community were more important than the lives of the hunted – animals could be pursued, frightened, injured/killed for the ends of prototypical men, who were entitled to express their dangerous aggressions through the hunt – outside of their own communities.

Ecofeminist analysis agrees with Roosevelt: Hunting is a “sport” that is “predicated on the need to harness an aggressive, sexual energy” both channeling and maintaining “man’s aggressive drive” (Kheel, “License” 92, 95). But of course, ecofeminists do not thereby condone hunting. It seems fairly obvious that civilized men are unlikely to result from activities that foster uncivilized behaviors such as taking pleasure in a sport where they dominate and destroy those who are vulnerable and innocent. This analysis of hunting as a quintessential expression of aggressive (dangerous) male (sexual) energy is supported by an analysis of English, which exposes a connection between hunting and the male sexual experience: Bullets are called “balls,” firing is referred to as “discharge,” hitting a body with a bullet is called

“penetration,” and firing prematurely is called “premature discharge” (Kheel, “License” 91-92). Accordingly, as men enter a woman with the hope of ejaculation, hunters enter the forests with the hope of a kill; as men tend to view ejaculation as the culmination of sex, hunters view the kill as the culmination of the hunt: Sex is traditionally thought to be over when a man has an orgasm; the hunt is never so decisively over as after a killing (Kheel in “License” 91). In Greco-diaspora nations, sexual domination is “a normal part of men’s fulfillment” (Luke 87), and the tendency for men to “take sexual pleasure” in “domination and destruction” is expressed in the hunt. Indeed, hunters sometimes describe the kill as “orgasmic” (as one of my students did in the classroom). Language analysis casts the hunt as akin to rape and murder.

In a podcast made by a group of men sitting around drinking beer and talking about hunting, one of them, speaking of a dead deer, says, “I love how sexy they look” (1:49:49). Another notes that he does not shoot waterfowl because he does not find it pleasurable. He then suggests ways to make the experience fun – “bring a blond” (Kemp, W. *et al* 1:24:30). His peer responds, “blonds, brunettes, I don’t care” (Kemp, W. *et al* 1:24:30). These hunters publicly admit that they enjoy hunting the vulnerable and the innocent with intent to kill, and that they view both *anymals* and *women* as means to their ends – their ends being the personal experience of pleasure.

The observation that killing for sport “includes a specifically sexual component” that is dangerous to humanity is supported by studies showing that convicted rapists who are also serial killers frequently started with and continued to torture and kill *anymals* before moving on to torture/kill humans, including Ted Bundy, David Berkowitz, Jeffrey Dahmer, the Boston Strangler, and Robert Pickton (a butcher by trade).<sup>8</sup> Studies show connections between harming and killing *anymals* and harming and killing human beings – between *anymal* abuse and domestic violence, child abuse, serial killings, and school shootings (Dalton n.p.; Robinson and Clausen n.p.; Fitzgerald, Kalof, and Dietz 158 and 175). Some refer to school shootings as “a breakdown of traditional hunting culture” (Brooke n.p.). Demonstrating the link, it is easy to find (on the internet) images of thwarted school bomber/shooter John LaDue “leering, holding a semi-automatic rifle next to a deer” (whom, we are told, he first maimed and then killed) (Gladwell n.p.; “Minn. Teen”). While this in no way indicates that young hunters will all become school shooters or serial killers, it does demonstrate the folly of fostering channels for expressing violence against the vulnerable and the innocent, or even permitting these violent expressions of domination. Frankly, it is common sense that those who have no compassion for *anymals* are likely to also lack compassion for human animals just as it is common sense that those who come from hunting families, who have access to guns and ammunition and who know how to use guns to kill – and have been encouraged to do so – have a greater chance of becoming school shooters than other children. Instead of making

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<sup>8</sup> For more information on links between violence toward *anymals* and toward people, see Amy Fitzgerald, *Animal Abuse and Family Violence: Researching the Interrelationships of Abusive Power* and Frank Ascione and Randall Lockwood, *Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence*.

excuses for business as usual – dualism expressed through marginalization, hierarchy, and oppression in the hunt – Greco-diaspora communities would do well to recognize hunting myths for what they are and reject “sport” hunting.

### Conclusion

Prominent ecofeminist thinkers have exposed dualism in the Greco-diaspora worldview as the source of systemic oppressions such as sexism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, racism, and speciesism. In this worldview of dualistic opposites, those who are comparatively empowered and privileged denigrate, marginalize, and oppress and exploit those viewed as “other.” Some of these ecofeminists applied this understanding to expose hunting as an expression of dualism, as power-over, control, and domination (unto death) that permits human beings to channel aggressive (sexual) energy into frightening, harming, and destroying those who are inherently vulnerable and innocent. Fostering a “sport” that is cruel, that allows an extreme minority to terrify, wound, and destroy the vulnerable and the innocent for pleasure (including a sexual component), is demonstrably unwise. Rather than feed the appetites and hone the skills of those who enjoy killing the defenseless, Greco-diaspora nations would do better to separate government agencies and interests, reshaping public policies to preserve and protect animals and ecosystems on behalf of the vast majority of citizens.

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