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More than the kill: Hunters' relationships with landscape and prey

Abstract

Through a discussion of the perceptions of hunters within a New Zealand tourism context, this paper explores how different perspectives of the 'connection' between hunter and prey are performed by participants and analysed by scholars using distinct ethical approaches. It attempts to contribute to the conversation about hunting ethics within the tourism and recreation fields by discussing the limitations of environmental ethical positions involved in analysing hunters' narratives and performances while engaging with their prey. An analysis of the sublime environment in which the hunting performance takes place proves to be central to the discussion of this sensual engagement with the hunted animal. It is argued that the contradictory feelings that sometimes prevail within hunters when it comes to the relationship between loving and killing must be considered in this kind of research and that some hunting practices are undoubtedly a way to feel close to, and engaged with, the target animals that are offered respect. Hunting's expressions as dynamic cultural performances serve to generate fruitful discussions, contributing to an understanding of broader tourist relationships with nonhuman animals and the ethical issues involved in hunting practices.

Key-words: hunting; environment; ethics; sublime landscape; tourism; New Zealand

Introduction

The relationships between humans and nonhuman animals have long been the focus of study of scholars from different disciplines. Approaches to the theme have also been varied, ranging from pragmatic accounts relating to evolutionary theories through to ecofeminist studies of the animal rights movement (Mullin, 1999). Tourism and recreation academics have only recently started to consider the different roles that nonhuman animals can play in the leisure experiences of humans from diverse societies (for recent efforts in this regard see: Bulbeck, 2005; Lovelock, 2008). This present paper presents a contribution to this conversation within the tourism and recreation fields and aims to discuss the limitations of environmental ethical positions involved in analysing hunters' narratives and performances while engaging with their prey.

It is easy to justify using the conversation around hunting to discuss issues of environmental ethics; the activity has been the focus of environmentalists, both for and against the practice, for several decades now (cf. Ingold, 1980; Leopold, 1968; Regan, 1999). The central ethical issue that stimulates the attention of scholars is that hunters engage with the natural environment, and particularly with nonhuman animals, in a way that is very close and full of significance. As Marvin (2005: 16) asserts, hunting "incorporates particular forms of engagements with animals" that are singular to this activity. These engagements involve an embodied encounter with nonhuman animals that is rich in meanings and sensualities in ways that few other recreational activities are able to provide.

And yet, this is probably the least understood facet of hunting: its immediacy and the senses exchanged with the prey and with other elements of the natural environment in which the practice takes place. Marvin's (2005) sophisticated attempt to explore this sensual engagement elicited the present contribution. In his accounts, Marvin discusses how the senses are explored and stimulated during the hunting performance but he does not endeavour to discuss the philosophical issues involved in this embodied experience.

The embodied experience of hunters has been largely disregarded also in tourism studies. Tourism scholars have focused their studies primarily on game management in tourism ventures (c.f. Baker, 1997), manifestations and impacts of hunting tourism in different local communities (c.f. Andereck, Valentine, Knopf & Vogt, 2005), hunting as a sustainable tourism option (c.f. Novelli, Barnes & Humavindu, 2006; van der Merwe & Saayman, 2005), the importance of wildlife in tourism experiences such as ecotourism operations (c.f. Newsome, Dowling & Moore, 2005) and consumptive tourism (c.f. Lovelock, 2008), as well as profiling the hunting tourist (c.f. Radder & Bech-Larsen, 2008), to name some of the most recurrent themes. However, there has been little or no research in the tourism field that explores not only the importance of the embodied experience of the hunting act to the hunter, but also the ethical issues involved in the hunting experience and the crucial role the environment has in the fulfilment of this experience. Here, I take the risk of exploring some of these issues, using my experiences with New Zealand hunters as the source of my contribution.

Some ethical issues related to hunting

Hunting plays an important role as a cultural manifestation intimately, but controversially, associated with nature. The main reason for the controversy surrounding it is the fact that there is killing involved in a leisure activity, which brings into play arguments about violence, brutality, manliness and anthropocentrism, amongst others (Bergman, 2005; Cartmill, 1993; Ingold, 1994; Kalof, Fitzgerald & Baralt, 2004).

Hunting has been formulated by several anthropologists as the "major catalyst in human evolutionary development" (Kheel, 2008: 72). Some go so far as ascribing to this practice the development of humans' basic social skills (Lee & DeVore, 1986). However, it is the development of this practice as part of modern and late modern societies' cultures that presents us with some valuable opportunities for discussion regarding ethics and nature. Nonetheless, the formulations around hunter-gatherer societies and the meanings attached to hunting in these cultures are pivotal to the current narratives of hunting in contemporary society. In spite of this, what will be argued here is that such narratives cannot be aligned with current practices as their ontological foundations are too dissimilar.

The Cosmological Approach of Tim Ingold

Tim Ingold (1994) offers some interesting discussions about hunter-gatherer societies. His main argument is that the hunting act cannot be considered as violent because for the hunter, as well as for their communities, the relationship between the hunter and the prey is one of profound connectedness. The prey will present herself to the hunter in an act of giving, building and enforcing a relationship of mutuality and co-existence that involves not only animals but also the earth as a wide-encompassing element. "(…) a hunt that is successfully consummated with a kill is taken as proof of amicable relations between the hunter and the animal that has willingly allowed itself to be taken." (Ingold, 1994: 12). This larger, cosmological perspective on the act of hunting guides the relationships between humans and nonhuman animals in these communities.

Kerasote (1993: 229, emphasis added) transposes this view to late modern societies when presenting arguments for his hunting engagements in the United States: "Wild elk, along with all the other creatures and plants of nature, are what the earth still provides from her initial grace. They can't be planted or harvested or ranched; *they can only be received*. Whether the means of receiving them is a spear, a gun, or one's plucking fingers matters less than the state of mind moving hands to action". It is this attempt to bring a unique cosmological interpretation of the ecosystem to contemporary society that reveals an interesting approach to modern hunting.

The difficulties with Ingold's arguments and their transposition to modern and late modern society are several. The most discussed one, and the focus of most of his critics, is that the actual act of killing cannot be interpreted as non-violent if one understands the animal who has been killed as an individual (Fausto, 2007). Ingold (1994) argues that the hunter respects and 'knows' his prey as much as one gets to know a friend. This metaphor, however, does not aid in the understanding of hunter-gatherers' cosmological relationships with the prey because, as noted above, the involvement with the animal goes beyond the hunt, involving the whole ecological system as well as religious thinking and involvement. On the contrary, Ingold's (1994) argument seems rather to serve contemporary hunters, giving them a point of departure from where they may start reasoning in favour of hunting.

Thus, critiques of Ingold's (1994) account of hunter-gatherer communities, and the subsequent use of his argument in support of hunting, stem from the fact that this perspective subordinates the individual animal to a larger animal category, that of the species (Maneesha, 2006), and therefore rejects the idea that individual animals have rights. As Knight (2005: 4) proposes, focusing on the population instead of on the individual animals presents hunters, and some wildlife managers, with arguments that try to neutralize "the moral objections levelled by animal welfarists at both recreational hunting and the use of culling in wildlife management and conservation". Most importantly, the metaphor produces a dualism that is contradictory to the cosmological understanding of the hunt by hunter-gatherer communities proposed by Ingold (Knight, 2005). If hunters know or engage with the

prey as species and with humans as individuals, then there is a clear divide and crucial difference between the two relationships.

Thus, it seems that Ingold's perspective on the hunt in hunter-gatherer societies does not present clear benefits to the discussion around contemporary hunting, only adding confusion to the understanding of the ethical and philosophical issues that are involved in today's practices. As stated above, the cosmological involvement of these earlier societies with the hunt cannot be aligned with contemporary engagements in hunting. Nonetheless, understanding where the limitations of his discourses lie does in fact contribute to the conversation about the ethical and philosophical underpinnings of today's hunting practices as I will discuss below.

Deep Ecology and Hunting

Deep ecology is probably the philosophical position most widely advocated by animal rights activists, although there are militants in this movement who claim that animal rights has a philosophy of its own (Regan, 1999). Initiated by Næss (1973), deep ecology was a clear effort to diverge from the anthropocentric view of nature and its common utilitarian and often consequentialist ethical perspective. The essential basis for the position adopted by deep ecologists is the constant questioning of fundamental values, or deep questioning of anthropocentric views of the (natural) world. Eight basic principles guide followers of deep ecology and consequently most animal rights activists. These principles state that nonhuman life forms have value in themselves and that humans have the obligation to let and allow them to flourish (Devall & Sessions, 1985).

The question of hunting, in relation to the deep ecology movement, may be raised by the third principle when it is declared that "humans have no right to reduce this richness [of life forms] and diversity except to satisfy *vital* needs" (Devall & Sessions, 1985: 70, emphasis in original). Several animal rights activists have used this principle to promote campaigns against recreational hunting, arguing that this form of 'sport' benefits only futile ego and anthropocentric needs. Moreover, the idea of nonhuman animals having value *per se*, that is, intrinsic, non-instrumental value, does also contribute to the argumentation against recreational hunting. In fact, animal rights advocates consider hunting the least acceptable form of wildlife use (Cohn, 1999). However, although the deep ecology movement has aided in the promotion of animal rights ideals, it is not clear from their principles and main philosophical positions what are the moral flaws regarding hunting as a cultural practice (even if recreational). Indeed, Devall and Sessions (1985), in "Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered", one of the most influential books on deep ecology and where the eight principles were first promoted, state that hunting, along with other nature-based activities, can help encourage self-realization – one of the main aims of deep ecology philosophy – through self-maturity. Furthermore, if hunters advocate that they are in fact doing pest control through their hunting, they would equally be preserving nature's otherwise threatened

richness and diversity. As a consequence, conservationists with clear anthropocentric ideals and preservationists who proclaim ecocentric positions can easily use deep ecology as a philosophical basis from which to align their arguments pro-hunting. Again, the individuality of nonhuman animals is ignored in the basic principles of deep ecology, and the moral and ethical questions involving the act of killing remain untouched by this eco-philosophical movement.

Peter Singer (1975), although clearly in agreement with deep ecology's ecocentric perspective, finds yet another problem with the basic principles of deep ecology. Singer (1975) was concerned that deep ecology had failed to acknowledge animal suffering as one of the key components of animal use and abuse. As Cobb (in Kheel, 2008: 181) points out, "to overcome anthropocentrism is precisely to recognize that other creatures also have their points of view, which are just as valid as ours, that their suffering is just as real as ours". Therefore, as Katz (2000) has argued, it does seem that Næss' ecosophy or deep ecology is still rooted in a human-centred worldview, as animals are not dealt with on an individual basis.

The use of principles of deep ecology to discuss ethical issues involved in the hunting performance thus seems limited as the embodied encounter cannot be thoroughly analysed if one does not consider or understand the animal as an individual with whom the hunter is exchanging intense and extremely sensual moments (Marvin, 2006). A relationship is built between hunter and prey, even if the quarry is conceived of initially only as a member of a community without an individual 'face'. Although ephemeral, the encounter carries with it meanings of profound connectedness. Deep ecology's disregard for this individuality hinders the examination of this embodied performance.

Ecofeminist's Approach to Hunting

In an attempt to integrate all individual and singular life forms within 'nature', ecofeminist philosophy brings a new essentialist perspective to the environmental movement when it presents the idea of a closer relationship being available specifically between women and the natural world (Sutton, 2004). One of the ecofeminist arguments is that both women and nature are subjugated by men, being constructed as the 'other', through a process of objectification and oppression (Kheel, 1995). In this way, ecofeminists claim to embrace the different 'others' in their cosmological relationship with Gaia, acknowledging that "gender, race, class and sexual orientation also influence our perception of others" (Kheel, 2008: 183). Moreover, according to this philosophy, women are naturally immersed in an ethic of care as they are able to develop through their upbringing and social conditioning a relational perspective to the 'other' (Curtin, 1991). In this sense, ecofeminism makes available to humans an experience of the suffering of the individual animal, and therefore embraces an ethical perspective that condemns the recreational practice of hunting. As nature and all its nonhuman life forms is understood as another 'other' in a male dominated world, it follows

logically that ecofeminists perceive women as better positioned to sympathize with and understand the subordination and suffering of nonhuman animals.

According to authors such as Mallory (2001), Collard and Contrucci (1989) and Kalof, Fitzgerald and Baralt (2004), hunting perpetuates the idea of masculine dominance over all 'others', so often the analogy with sex in hunting discourse demonstrate the symbolic meanings attached to the practice (Kalof, Fitzgerald & Baralt, 2004). Masculinity, dominance and power are incessantly invoked in these discourses which, once again, would justify a special relationship existing between women and nonhuman animals – especially the ones, that is, the animals, involved in the hunting act.

Although extremely powerful and significant to discussions around both the moral adequacy of hunting and the ethical issues related to the practice, what the ecofeminist position fails to account for is the significance of the hunting practice as a cultural ritual that, at some point, is intended to reunite the human animal with the environment in which it belongs. As I will argue below, some hunters do engage in a relationship with the 'natural world' that ecofeminists attest is not available to them. Thus the essentialist position taken by ecofeminists is not adequate to account for some of the human – nonhuman animal sensual exchanges that may occur during the hunting performance.

A consideration of the ethical issues around hunting, then, must necessarily be situated outside of both Ingold's ideas and traditional anthropocentric ethical systems. Furthermore, the self-labelled ecocentric positions of ecofeminism and deep ecology prevent a deeper engagement with some of the central aspects of the hunting performance; the sensual relationships between human and nonhuman animals and the feelings of love and sorrow for the animal's death that these entail.

Hunting in New Zealand

New Zealand hunting has some interesting commonalities with the history of North American sport hunting. Both countries initiated their hunting culture by negating their allegedly elitist counterpart in England (Kheel, 2008; Young, 2004). That meant that, initially, hunting was an expression of difference and therefore played an important role as an identifier for both colonies. Moreover, in both countries there was a belief in an everlasting wildlife resource, even though in New Zealand all game species were introduced and not native to the country's environment. Indeed, the fact that these animals were effectively introduced by settlers provides an interesting differentiator from hunting practices of the United States and other countries. The release of game species was a clear effort to make New Zealand the settlers' new 'home' (Young, 2004). Introducing animals that would not only remind immigrants of the mother-country but also provide for their leisure was an important means to connect to the land. More importantly, this new 'home', although made familiar by the introduction of recognizable animals, is singular in the new relationship with them. A

central aspect of this novel relationship is the landscape where these animals were released and where hunting and settling took place.

The New Zealand environment proved very different from the United Kingdom's long tamed landscapes, and the intense and inhospitable natural formations greatly influenced the construction of the new country's identity (Young, 2004). As I will discuss below, this landscape provided – and still does – an experience of the sublime which is central to the hunting experiences and performances in New Zealand. Moreover, tourism is also deeply rooted in the Kantian sublime aesthetic, being a product of diverse historical and contemporary processes that also greatly influence other aspects of New Zealand culture and relationships with the environment. It is my argument here that 'escaping' from the tamed environment of New Zealand major cities and towns and travelling into these 'untamed' landscapes is critical for the hunting experience in New Zealand, and more specifically on Stewart Island, a remote destination by nature. Lovelock and Robinson (2005) make a similar claim when they affirm that the hunting experience on Stewart Island is greatly influenced and enhanced by what they call the 'island' experience, one which involves long travel, by boat, helicopter or plane, to the island's hunting blocks[1]. In addition, the authors affirm that "the characteristics of environment, with rugged coastlines, dense bush, plus interesting birdlife (…), combine with the opportunities to fish and dive (…) to produce a unique hunting experience" (Lovelock & Robinson, 2005: 158). However, the authors do not fully engage with these issues; rather, they limit their comments to only acknowledge the importance of these factors to the hunting experience. The engagement with these issues is part of my endeavour in this paper.

As briefly mentioned above, another important aspect of the introduction of game species for building a new but familiar 'home' involved the intention of constructing a fair and egalitarian new land. As Young (2004: 11) states: "reacting to the class-ridden system they had left behind, New Zealand's British immigrants were, so the story goes, congenitally opposed to privilege: hunting and fishing, for instance, were available to everyone". Hunting was a form of leisure for all, and this understanding still grounds the New Zealand hunting culture. As a result, present hunting practice eschews any form of pretension. Although, for city dwellers, the opportunity to spend a few days hunting may now involve significant expenditure related to travel, food and accommodation, the hunting performance retains egalitarian characteristics. Hunting blocks are available to anyone who applies to hunt there and excess demand is dealt with through a system of balloting. Hunters get immersed into the bush, camping in tents and rustic huts without differences being made between different economic or social classes.

These singularities about New Zealand hunting certainly promote narratives and performances unique to the New Zealand context and surely are responsible for building a

[1] The importance of travelling time to the travel/tourism experience has been remarked by several authors (for a recent account see Watts & Urry, 2008).

relationship with the prey animal that cannot fully be understood if engaged with only through the available environmental philosophies. This intricate web of narratives and performances is extremely complex and challenges current ethical positions for and against contemporary forms of hunting. Following, I will present some of these narratives and performances as I experienced them during this study.

Methodological Considerations

Before discussing the tourists' hunting engagements with the prey, it is necessary to clarify the methodological approach taken by the author. The engagements I discuss here are engagements narrated to me in the first person by hunters whom I met during the period of my study. Also, and in addition, they are engagements as I perceived them from my own experiences with hunters during eighteen months of research in the South Island of New Zealand, between January 2007 until June 2008. Therefore, I do not understand this research as confined to the experiences I shared and witnessed on Stewart Island, but encompassing all my engagements with New Zealand hunting since the beginning of this project until today.

As a foreign woman with no previous background in the activity of hunting, my impressions are my own and were formed outside of any familiarity with the discourses within which hunting is usually situated. This does not represent, however, a weakness, but simply a constitutive element of the research that must be acknowledged throughout the process of interpretation and discussion of experiences, performances and narratives. Although theoretically founded, these impressions are distinctly mine and cannot be assumed to present the unmediated 'voices' of New Zealand hunters, although, inevitably, they are informed by my direct experience of those voices. Such a presentation of hunters' voices is not the intention of my contribution. Rather, this paper is an attempt to engage with both the theoretical underpinnings of environmental ethics as they relate to recreational hunting in a tourism context and the actual performances of those who are physically immersed in the practice. Nonetheless, extracts from conversations will be used to illustrate my interpretation and hopefully will contribute to the understanding of the issues raised throughout this piece.

A critical constructionist approach was utilised to engage with, and examine, the hunters' practices and discourses about human - nonhuman animals relationships in a New Zealand hunting context. I was embedded within the hunting activities, and diary notes, informal conversations and in-depth dialogues form the basis of the discussions. Guided by this epistemological stance, the analysis of the material gathered during the embedded research act is from a critical interpretivist position. Moreover, the critical constructionist position taken here is complementary and implies an understanding of the environment and all its living forms as realities that are constantly re-constructed by a social system that imposes upon them meanings that are relevant only in that social context. As Laclau (1990:101) suggests "A stone exists independently of any system of social relations, but it is,

for instance, either a projectile or an object of aesthetic contemplation only within a specific discursive configuration". More importantly, this stance entails an understanding of social practices as dynamic and that "the interpretation of context or culture is both individual and collective and needs to be understood not as an acquisitional process but as an intersubjective process of ongoing negotiation" (Hoskins, 2000: 48). It is through an embedded engagement with this research that I endeavour to participate in the ongoing negotiation process of interpreting human – nonhuman animals relationships in hunting performances with others who are involved with this theme. Therefore, this research involves a reflexive act on the part of the researcher who has been narrating experiences in the first person throughout this piece.

New Zealand and Stewart Island

Located south of the South Island, separated by the Foveaux Strait, Stewart Island is home of impressive native wildlife and is known within the outdoor communities 'circuits' for its challenging terrain and magnificent landscape. The island has only a small permanent settlement of approximately 390 inhabitants (Statistics New Zealand, 2002) and its major sources of income are commercial fishing, aquaculture and tourism (Lovelock & Robinson, 2005).

Hunting has been an important recreation and tourism activity on Stewart Island since the beginning of the 20th century (Lovelock & Robinson, 2005). Whitetail deer were introduced in 1905 and today form the only readily available herd of Whitetail deer in the Southern Hemisphere (Stewart Island Promotion Association 2007). Red deer can also be found on mid-altitude habitats, but in lower numbers, therefore attracting less attention of tourists who venture into the island.

Most areas around the coast, and certainly where most whitetail deer can be found, are managed for recreational hunting by a ballot system in which hunting blocks are defined and can be booked for pre-determined periods of time. This system is administered by the Department of Conservation and divides the coast into 35 blocks. At these sites, hunting parties stay in huts or at camp sites, depending on the area chosen.

There are different ways of getting to the hunting blocks, varying according to the distance from the mainland or to the amount of investment (in time and money) that hunting parties are prepared to make. Some of the most remote areas require several hours of travel by boat, whereas some more accessible blocks can be reached in less than one hour by a small plane or helicopter from mainland. The movement to and from the hunting blocks are often seen by hunters as an important part of their hunting experience, and contribute to the immersion into the sublime landscape, as I will be discussing below.

During the eighteen months of the research, several visits were made to the island, ranging from four days to twenty-four days duration. Most hunting blocks were visited at some stage, with the only exception being the blocks located in the far south of the island,

accessible only by charter boat. Nonetheless, several hunters that travel to this area contributed narratives of their experiences, which are included in the accounts that follow.

These visits allowed me to overcome the status of a complete 'outsider' by listening, seeing and performing *with* the research participants (Connolly & Reilly 2007). They also constitute part of the process of *embeddeness* of the researcher in the research.

The Hunting Experiences and Performances

Clearly, there are several aspects of the recreational hunt that could be analysed from an ethical and philosophical perspective. However, it seems that out of all these possibilities the sensual engagement with the prey and with the natural environment in which the activity takes place is the least discussed or understood by academics studying the contemporary practice of hunting. My effort will now concentrate on presenting some of those issues as they arose during, but not restricted to, my experiences with hunters on Stewart Island, a rewarding and well-known whitetail deer hunting area in Rakiura National Park, New Zealand.

It is evident from the discussion above that hunting in New Zealand has a distinct 'personality', for it is still strongly connected with the country's settler identity. This identity influences, and is influenced by, the performance of hunters in the outdoors and it is fundamental to the narratives of their experiences. Several hunters will refer constantly to the idea of nature's challenge and that this challenge is one of the main motivations for their engagement with hunting. It is important to note here that the challenge is not related only to the shooting skills or the actual hunt. For these men, the challenge refers to something more important, with a deeper meaning. This meaning emerges from the opportunity to feel and act as their predecessors did, those who lived through, and participated in, the era when the harshness of the New Zealand physical (natural) environment was tamed. As Patrick[2] puts into words:

> *"I think the bottom line is: it's an adventure, it's going back to basics, to where the settlers were. You're out there in the outdoors and it can be dangerous, so there's an element of danger and risk involved with hunting […] It's also the challenge of trying to get an animal 'cos it's their home, so they know it a lot better than we do and they've got much better senses than we have, instincts and sense of smell, and their eyesight might be better too in some cases. So, it's the whole challenge of you against the animal, you against the elements! because you don't know what the weather's gonna do when you're out there and that's the big thing that gets you hunting." (Patrick)*

[2] Note that the names used throughout this paper are not the names of the actual hunters whom I met and dialogued, for obvious ethical reasons. Instead, pseudonyms were used to ensure that these people are seen and understood by readers as ordinary individuals.

A central aspect of this challenge relates to being immersed within a sublime environment. The sublime landscape has been discussed as "beautiful but potentially dangerous: sanctified, visited, enjoyed, photographed, then left; a vision to inspire" (Bell, 1996: 29). Thus, being absorbed in an awe-inspiring and dramatic environment certainly enhances the idea of challenge, be it physical or emotional. Several authors have classified both the New Zealand native and contemporary landscape as sublime, including Park (2006) who argues that this environment, together with any embodied engagement with it, has helped build the country's sense of nationhood.

Also ingrained in the sublime concept, within a New Zealand context, is the idea of movement from an ordinary place to a remote setting, typically a tourism construct. It is therefore not only significant but central to the hunting experience of these tourists that they are engaged in activity that takes place in a space where they are distanced from mundane, every-day routines and landscapes, as we will further discuss below. As one of the hunters mentioned:

> *"you know, certainly, the fish, or, or the venison or whatever happens to be, is the, the end result, but certainly the whole package is actually getting to that end result… you know, organizing the trip, going on the trip, the boat ride out there, the company, the company on the trip…" (Marty)*

Moreover, Henry and Berg's (2006: 635) argument that "the ostensibly sublime character of the New Zealand landscape was framed through a heteromasculine gaze" helps us to understand the significance of the masculine practice of hunting as a way of trying to retain this particular physical engagement with the sublime; one that assists the maintenance of the country's identity.

It is relevant to highlight also Patrick's reference above to the senses as part of the experience. As Marvin has argued, statements like this stress the embodiment of the hunting act, and how this practice is a fully multi-sensory and multi-sensual one "that depends on an immersion into a multi-sensory and multi-sensual world" (2005: 16). Through the act of 'doing', the hunter can 'dialogue' with nature in a way that a distant gaze would not be able to allow. As Crouch points out, "'doing' can be given the power to figure, and to refigure nature" (2003: 28). Therefore, the embodied nature of the engagement with the sublime landscape, this total immersion in it, provides hunters with a sensual experience that not only perpetuates the collective identity but also inscribes, in a profoundly corporeal sense, the meanings attached to nature and what they represents for this collective identity.

Another important narrative found in hunters' discourses; one that emphasizes the importance of this bodily immersion within nature is the narrative of 'being out there', 'away from it all'. Again, this enactment of the escape into the wild landscape where one can have solitude but, at the same time, excitement and adventure, accentuates the sublime ideal and

the settler character that is so much connected to the land, in its most physical form. The passages below highlight some of these issues.

> *"I can go hunting for a weekend not shooting anything and explore the surroundings and have a great time and still enjoy myself, but basically all I've done is tramp. But I've been looking for animals and all I've done is carried a rifle and never used it so it's sort of tramping isn't it? There is a similarity whereas I'm sort of not going just from one point to another to say I've done it. I'm just wandering around aimlessly looking for an animal, really." (Patrick)*

> *"I enjoy getting out in the bush, you get a couple of hours solitude, down there it's beautiful as you know; just having a wee look around, take the rifle, if I get to shoot a deer it's a bonus" (Pryce)*

Again, these quotes also emphasise the tourism component of the hunting experience, the idea of escape as an important facet of their engagement in the activity to the fulfilment of their experience.

> *"So I suppose the beauty of Stewart Island is that you're just totally away from everything, it's the remoteness, there's nothing to do and see, just enjoy the landscape and the activities there (...) I think my time in the bush is better [than the trampers'] because I am actually sitting there just sucking it in and enjoying the sun on me and so I am not saying, one is right and one is wrong but..." (Callum)*

Hunting in New Zealand, and in particular on Stewart Island, is surrounded by an almost sacred ritual of male connectedness, not only to the land as a settler, but to fellow men who also share this settler identity. Going there, being there, escaping from everyday life, is a sensual way of engaging with this identity in a manner that creates meanings that certainly go beyond the hunting act and the enactment of power and dominance often referred to in academic literature. My argument is that it is not only necessary to go hunting as a sport practice; it is crucial that the performance takes place in an environment that provides the physical sense of being connected to a sublime and supposedly untamed landscape. Once again, this landscape constitutes a tourist space, as it is relevant to the hunters that their experience happens in a place that may be familiar but never ordinary, or considered as 'home'. Again, as Patrick's quote above indicates, the hunters may go for days without shooting anything but they will still be highly satisfied with their experience. In fact, more often than not that will be the case. Hunting whitetail deer requires highly developed hunting skills and for many hunters on Stewart Island and elsewhere in the country, being able effectively to shoot one is a feat. Nonetheless, the hunting experience occurs, because

it is more than the hunt; it is the involvement and engagement with the environment that takes place interdependently, as the quote below shows us.

> *"Well, certainly with deer hunting it is the experience of being there, as much as seeing an animal or getting one or anything. It's just being there really.*
> *Yeah, just being out amongst the bush and that. We quite often, 90% of the time, we come back without anything but it still doesn't stop us. You know, climbing up a mountain and stuff like that. Just being out and away from everything." (Garth and Dan during a conversation).*

The rituals usually are similar. Whitetail traces can be seen, and movement often occurs, in the first light of day or the later hours of the afternoon. No matter how late the previous night has been, hunters will wake up with sunrise and get ready for the day. The riffles will be carefully maintained, the maps will be analysed and projects for the day will be discussed with fellow hunters. Typically, one or two from the group will go stalking while the others will enjoy their time getting involved in other activities. In the particular case of Stewart Island, some will go fishing, some will go diving and some will just explore the surroundings. The camp will be empty by early in the morning. In the first hours of the afternoon the group will gather again and after exchanging their experiences of the day the groups will again part and this time different hunters will go pursuing the whitetail deer. When the day turns into night, the group congregates again at camp anticipating the return of the last hunter. Successful or not, the hunt will be described in detail over drinks until late in the night. If successful, the group celebrates the achievement with a big feast. Each individual will have a task assigned; some will skin the deer, some will cook it, some will take care of storing the meat and all will join in the celebration.

The ritualistic enactment of the hunting trip highlights the importance given to the senses and the physical contact with the wild landscape. Although not always a successful hunt with an animal being shot, the entire experience in the remote, 'untamed' landscape is what matters for these hunters:

> *"it's really hard to describe how important it is, or how highly you rate it, but I was just thinking this morning, for example, if somebody offered me ten days on the Mediterranean in a cruise, with airfares over there it might cost easily 20, 25 thousand dollars; another guy came for the same time and said here's your ten days down on Stewart Island and it will cost 750 dollars, I'll go to Stewart Island. Well, I just say that because that's how highly I would rate a 10 day spell down there on, say, Port Adventure." (Ben)*

Within this relationship with the wild, sublime environment there is a more immediate relationship with the animal. Even though the encounters with the prey are less frequent, the power they exert upon the hunter is of immense magnitude. In fact, one could say that this is what they are mostly anxious about and it is certainly the climax of the experience. I have argued that the immersion in the sublime environment is as important as the actual hunt in the hunting experience. The animal and the chase is an essential part of that magnificence. The physical, multi-sensorial encounter with the prey is, therefore, undoubtedly the culmination of that engagement.

This relationship with the animal in contemporary New Zealand hunting cannot be mistaken for, or compared with, the cosmological connections that typify hunter-gatherers' performances (Ingold, 1994). Although contemporary hunters still refer to an idea of 'going back to basics', to being self-sufficient in nature, and even make reference to hunter-gatherer societies, the concept of an unitary cosmos where humans are just another living form does not guide today's hunting practices. Nonetheless, the relationship with the prey must not be interpreted as being of any less significance. Contemporary hunters do engage with the animal in a powerful manner and I argue here, following Marvin's (2005) work, that the sensuality of the experience within nature and the sublime landscape helps to shape this engagement.

Hunters often refer to deer as beautiful or majestic, and there is a true admiration for the animal's beauty, intelligence and physical abilities, as the quote below exemplifies.

> *"As I say the deer are beautiful deer, the whitetail down on Stewart Island they're just magnificent, they're beautiful to watch, they're such a cool animal… red deer, you get big stags, I mean, they're just huge animals, Wapiti, in Fiordland, they're, once again, they're huge, big huge animals, nice to watch, maybe the odd moose there, who knows? But then you get the sika up on the north island, which, once again, are beautiful animals" (Marty)*

This admiration seems contradictory to the act of killing. However, as one of the hunters below points out, such admiration is one part of the performance and, if the animal is properly sighted, it needs to happen.

> *"[…] no, yeah, I mean, that's certainly a bit of a downward, but that's part of it though, you know… I mean, everything has sort of a bad side, I suppose… yeah, there is a little bit of sadness… you soon get over that, I suppose… […] I mean, it's certainly not the nicest thing to do but… it's, it's the thrill of the hunt. Ask any hunter and I'm pretty sure they'll say that the actual… once they go out to the animal they're probably with… a bit of sadness, but… at the end of the day it's… yeah, I mean, that's part of it…but not a big part of it, you know." (Marty)*

Ortega y Gasset once asserted: “one does not hunt in order to kill; on the contrary, one kills in order to have hunted” (1995: 105). My argument here, however, is that this analysis is not enough to explain the hunt. Contemporary New Zealand hunters need not kill in order to have hunted. The kill is just an episode within the hunting experience. Pryce, for instance, has never shot a deer. He has been going to Stewart Island to hunt for five years but has never succeeded in shooting a whitetail. Nevertheless, he does not consider that his experiences have been diminished by this fact. Usually, he spends between eight to ten days on the island and goes hunting on every single day of his stay. According to Pryce, just sitting alone in the middle of the bush, in a place where one can be fooled into thinking that no one else has ever been before, is what he looks forward to most.

The killing is an aspect of the hunt that is almost dismissed from these hunters’ accounts. It is such an ephemeral event that it vanishes with the pleasure of the achievement. The feeling of accomplishment does also dispel the sentiment of sorrow for the death of such a magnificent creature. The sorrow reflects the admiration for the animals and, most importantly, the performance shared with them as the passages below reflect:

> *“If I stop to watch and admire the deer, I just can’t shoot it. So [when I go hunting] I have to see it and immediately shoot it, otherwise I can’t”. (Mick)*

> *“I’ve shot quite a few whitetail and I always feel like a bit of a mean bastard really ‘cos they’re such a beautiful animal, even though I enjoy hunting them. […] after I’ve shot it I think what an awful thing to do, it’s such a beautiful deer and that’s probably why I won’t go back to Stewart Island for a while, just to, you know... I’ve shot quite a few of them in there now. Yeah, they’re probably one of my favourite animals.” (Patrick)*

Another interesting aspect about the singularity of the hunting performance in New Zealand is the reference to hunting as a sport. As in other parts of the world, New Zealand hunters refer to their recreational activity as a sporting activity. Leaving aside any consideration of the reasons behind the use of this term, what is relevant to our discussion here is the inadequacy of the expression when compared with its use in countries such as the United States or England. If we understand sport as a contest where there is an opponent to be beaten, it seems inadequate to formulate the hunting experience within which I immersed myself during the process of this research as a game. Even though it is present in their narratives of the experience, and arguably in their performances, the contest *against* the prey does not seem to be central to the tourists’ hunting experience. The challenge takes place within the sublime landscape, with all of the spiritual implications of that setting, and cannot be reduced to the challenge merely of shooting a deer. The performance of hunters

happens while deeply connected *with* the prey and *within* the awe-inspiring natural environment.

Final Considerations

I have argued that the relationship between human and nonhuman animals is a complex field and one which legitimately can include considerations of tourism and recreational hunting. Traditional attempts to situate this practice within an ethics of animal rights, deep ecology, ecofeminism and Ingold's approach to hunter-gatherer societies have been inadequate. Hunting experiences are more complex than academics so far have acknowledged. Consequently, this paper has challenged these traditional analyses by demonstrating that a more sophisticated approach to ethics needs to be taken, outside of essentialism and the consequentialist/non-consequentialist dichotomy. As an alternative I have described hunting practice and performance as a sensual experience occurring within a sublime landscape; where the hunter and prey are closely connected. This approach provides a more fruitful way of discovering and articulating the nuances and subtleties that characterise contemporary recreational hunting particularly as performed with whitetail deer on Stewart Island, New Zealand.

Furthermore, the discussion presented here has emphasised how the sublime landscape, situated away from the daily and ordinary, plays a pivotal role in the tourists' hunting experiences and performances, as it would not be possible for these to happen anywhere else. Therefore, there is an important component of the hunting experience that is entrenched in a tourism context but yet to be fully contemplated by tourism scholars. This embodied encounter with the sublime landscape and with the hunted animal deserves more in depth discussions within the tourism field. The material presented here provides an initial contribution to this emerging line of enquiry.

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