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## **Words Matter: Exposing the Camouflaged Violence of Hunting Rhetoric**

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*Until we extend our circle of compassion to all living things, we ourselves will not find peace.*

*Albert Schweitzer<sup>1</sup>*

*To stay with the concept of power dominant in our current situation...helps guarantee the defeat of other ways of living...To remain within the existing cultural values helps ensure that nothing else will be possible. To seek ways of embodying other understandings of power makes it possible that being as domination and control will not have the last word.*

*Sharon D. Welch, A Feminist Ethic of Risk<sup>2</sup>*

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It's easy to invoke words of kindness and peace; however, too often we do so without seriously considering exactly what we mean by what we say or what the implications might be of our words. In the contentious age in which we live, when virtually anyone can voice their views on TV or on the radio or Internet, we insist on the truthfulness of our personal standpoints—and the erroneous thinking of those with other views—often with vitriol in our voices that contradicts our self-proclaimed peaceful intentions. I'm as guilty of such action as anyone else; however, despite my own hypocrisy, as a university writing teacher, I regularly challenge students to think about what they mean when they make public their professions of belief, endorsement, or disagreement in the classroom or in their writing.

One “theme” I've recently used as a focal point in one of my first-year writing courses is animal exploitation, for which I assign *Dominion: The Power of Man, The Suffering of Animals, and The Call to Mercy* by conservative political writer Matthew Scully.<sup>3</sup> The book challenges much of what my largely rural, religious, conservative, meat-eating, pro-gun, pro-hunting students take for granted about the role of animals in our society and economy. They assume their knowledge and moral foundation regarding animals as consumer products created by God solely for human benefit is complete and above question. As a result many rarely give thought to the often-violent inter-relationships that are currently common between humans and animals. As they read the book, many are disturbed by the graphic stories Scully narrates of brutal animal exploitation and are shocked by the prevalent practices of which they're unaware. They insist that they “love animals,” and they express anger at those individuals Scully cites who argue in support of “necessary” animal cruelty or who kill animals at whim. Yet they insist just as vociferously that their love of hunting is justified and humane, and that although it's too bad for the animals condemned to slaughter in assembly line “meat production,” they also “love meat”

and have no plans to give up or even reduce their beef, poultry, pork, or seafood consumption. They do not (or will not) see the contradictions between their words and actions, leaving one to wonder exactly what the words “I love animals” mean. But today’s college students are not alone in the contradictions between their words and actions; rather they reflect a systemic, largely unquestioned ethical and rhetorical divide.

Many articulate animal advocates have written thought-provoking challenges to systemic animal cruelty, so that is not my goal here. Instead, I focus on the language by which we humans justify—both to ourselves and in public—our often violent actions against animals, and ultimately against other humans. For the sake of space I have narrowed my focus to the representative language of public hunting. But my point is much larger: that our incomplete knowledge about the realities of hunting mirrors a lack of knowledge in other arenas of oppression and violence that is likewise based in a lack of critical engagement with what we are told. Such a lack of knowledge becomes all too common precisely because “we”—literate if not highly educated beings—seem to readily accept an implicit universal understanding of such common violent practices.

I question language that seems to go unchallenged by much of American society, if not globally, despite the fact that hunting language regularly describes and extols arbitrary violence for sheer sport. Admittedly there is a host of other possible arenas of violence, in these early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, ripe for critical interrogation, that could be argued to be more significant: “war” on “terrorism” and escalating violence in the Middle East, genocides, global child sexual exploitation, environmental destruction, threats of nuclear annihilation, astounding poverty; even nature herself seems eager get in on the act with extreme natural disasters that have traumatized thousands around the globe. In the context of such relentless global trauma,

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why should we attend to the issue of hunting? We're "just" talking about animals after all. Why be bothered that the violence of the recreational and, in many cases, government-endorsed slaughter of animals (too often to the point of extinction) rarely even makes the local news, unless some hunter "bags a newsworthy one" or accidentally gets injured through his/her own carelessness or that of another hunter? Rather than seriously question hunting violence, if hunting is made public at all, defenders of hunting have the last word, consistently presenting the sport as a time-honored pastime that only reflects the best of noble character and human stamina against unpredictable nature.

But the words by which we justify violence against animals have direct implications for how we justify targeting each other as humans for exploitation or destruction. As Albert Schweitzer implies rather directly, humanity's peace is directly tied into the peace we humans extend to animals. I chose hunting in particular, to begin an investigation into the misleading language used to extol violence, because of its directly violent nature. After all, the ultimate goal of hunting is extermination of a living being, by violent, bloody means. Yet hunting is regularly portrayed as a leisurely outdoor activity that is fun for the whole family. Hunting directly exposes the reality that the language justifying violent human domination of other living beings, demands interrogation for at least two reasons, especially by a self-identified "compassionate" American society.

First, animals are virtually powerless in the world, with no voice to speak on their own behalf; for the most part, animals are at the mercy of humans who, as a whole, often do not act mercifully toward them, despite our insistence that in our care, animals fare well. In fact, the voicelessness and powerlessness of animals are often used against them, as justification for the violence humans inflict upon them.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, Judeo-Christian theology, a significant

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influence on Western culture, worldview, and language, particularly in the U.S., has used scriptural text to support a sort of divinely authored “manifest destiny” toward animals, much as has been done in the past with regard to biblical support of human exploitation and extermination—for slavery or for Native American genocide, for example. That is, “we,” God’s righteous humans, can do whatever we want to do with or to “them” (the unrighteous, or animals, which are already condemned or have no soul) since God said we could; in fact God commanded “us” to rule over the whole earth (“Go forth and multiply, subdue and have dominion over the earth,” Genesis 1:28)<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, animals have suffered immensely at the hands of humans, for food, clothing and household goods, entertainment and sport, scientific experimentation, and, ultimately, extermination.

Second, animals have no inherent legal status by which compassionate humans can act to protect them from exploitation (much as has been the case throughout history with slaves, children, and women). Existing animal control laws—generally applied only to a limited range of “domestic” animals such as dogs and cats (at least in the U.S.)—are too often minimal and porous; what few legal standards do exist often are followed only minimally or are disregarded by law enforcement and judicial personnel. Look at the tragedy of how U.S. gulf coast animals fared in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; it wasn’t offensive enough how we treated those humans who had no escape and were helpless before the rising water; animals were considered to be little more than household goods, not living beings or beloved family members, and evacuees were expected to simply leave them behind as they might leave behind a favorite chair. Animals are treated primarily as human prey, as possessions, or as technologies for human manipulation, not as living, feeling beings with inherent value in themselves. Their worth is evaluated solely by their usefulness to our well-being. They are classified as “other” in our **Volume 1 Number 1 (2007): 2–37**

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efforts to defend our animal exploitation, worthy of compassionate consideration only at human convenience or whim. Hunting language offers insightful illustrations of how unexamined words of violence against “others” underlies an ethic of animal—and ultimately human—domination, regardless of how nobly our motives for such violence might be constructed.

### **Tally Ho! Hunting Virtues**

Hunting in the U.S. is publicly presented as a popular commonplace of 21<sup>st</sup>-century American culture with a long, rich history, aided and abetted by current print, broadcast, and Internet media. Hunting programs regularly air on cable television channels, and the Internet is rife with hunting Web sites. Where I live in western Tennessee, gun and hunting-centered outdoor magazines fill large sections of retail magazine racks. And in a stroll through the local Wal-mart Super Center, a person can get lost in the outdoor sports aisles, filled to overflowing with a wide array of hunting paraphernalia from head-to-toe camouflage clothing to weaponry, particularly during the fall hunting season though available year-round. Hunting is not only a well-established given in much of American culture, it’s regarded as a traditional, virtually sacred outdoor activity, as much a part of a noble, patriotic American character as mom, apple pie, “one nation under God,” and the American flag. To question hunting is to question being American.

Ironically, for such a supposedly universal pastime in the U.S., the actual ratio of American hunters relative to the total population is small—around seven percent according to some sources<sup>6</sup>. Steve Williams, Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS), laments that the numbers of U.S. hunters is declining. He reports that as of 2001, “13 million Americans

enjoyed hunting, a 7 percent drop compared to 10 years ago.” The context for his report was a speech at the National Shooting Sports Summit, where he publicly committed himself, personally and professionally, to working to reverse the decline and “re-energize the sport.”<sup>7</sup> He will have high-powered help. In his book, Scully critiques the booming financial success of large, national and global, hunting organizations such as Safari Club International, a hunting network with extensive economic and political power, which it uses to ensure hunting’s unfettered future. Directly challenging the noble yet humble, “aw shucks,” character Safari Club International (SCI) presents for itself and its members, Scully explains that “[t]he average Safari Club member owns eleven rifles, six shotguns, five handguns, and a bow”—a small arsenal—with which to stalk and kill “wild game,” a term that I believe makes of living animals mere, expendable, objects, free for the taking if the hunter can “bag” one.

My pro-hunting students, assigned to read Scully’s book, regularly discount Scully’s challenges, insisting that he’s the one twisting words, seeking out only those extreme, unethical hunters to make his anti-hunting argument. And yet the Safari Club members he cites include such “extremists” as Retired General Norman Schwarzkopf; Wade Boggs, a future professional baseball hall-of-famer; a realtor and former owner of a National Football League team; a trial lawyer who was SCI president when Scully was conducting his research by speaking himself with a diversity of SCI members. According to Scully, the average SCI hunter “spends \$14,000 a year on hunting, compared to \$1,500 for the average American hunter, for an annual half a billion dollars spent by the entire membership.”<sup>8</sup> And despite Scully’s implications that hunters are male, Heidi Prescott, of the Fund for Animals, who like Scully holds to an anti-hunting standpoint, reports that around eight percent of hunters are women.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of their small numbers, male and female hunters together have created a public image for hunting as only

virtuous, a sanctified tradition and an American heritage, which is the right and privilege of hunters to protect at all costs from unenlightened anti-gun and anti-hunting peaceniks. Their rhetorically-constructed self-identity hides the bloody violence inherent in hunting; what violence is acknowledged is cast only in the best light.

In this article, I challenge the “virtuous violence” that is rendered invisible in pro-hunting language. I examine three common arguments: hunting as “conservation” or “animal management”; hunting as a spiritual celebration of God, humanity, and nature; and hunting as a survival contest between human and beast. In all three arguments, killing animals for sport is ennobled, making hunting impervious to critical interrogation in the public arena. Being a hunter becomes a sought-after attribute of high moral character. In fact, 2004 Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry deliberately, though unsuccessfully, emphasized his own love of hunting late in his campaign (in a hunting expedition in Ohio about two weeks before Election Day)—complete with photo ops in camouflage, hunting rifle in hand, images splashed across every major news outlet. He sought to enhance his presidential *persona* in the minds of voting hunters and gun enthusiasts who, due in large part to the lobbying and campaign efforts of the National Rifle Association, have heavily affiliated themselves with the “compassionate conservative” agenda and goals of the Republican party. Kerry’s goose hunting expedition even made international news; BBCnews.com reports that at the end of the hunt, Kerry emerged “without a bird in hand, insisting he had killed a goose but was ‘too lazy’ to carry it.<sup>10</sup> According to Jodi Wilgoren of *The New York Times*, Kerry confirmed his success: “‘Everybody got one, everybody got one,’ said Mr. Kerry, his hand stained with goose blood, though he was the only member of the hunting party not carrying a carcass.”<sup>112</sup>

For the purposes of this investigation into deceptive uses of the language of violence, I have confined myself primarily to hunting texts available online. These texts are accessible to the public at large, and they well represent the common portrait of hunting as wholly virtuous, a self-identity that, despite involving only a small minority of the national population, seems to have wide appeal and a virtually blind acceptance. If significant numbers of individuals find hunting problematic, they appear to be a silent majority. The reality is that the pro-hunting individuals and organizations creating and interacting with those multi-media hunting texts, many of whom hold passionately to the words and ethics they put forth, despite their limited number, together wield a great deal of public, political clout.

### **We Kill out of Respect, to Protect and “Conserve”**

I begin with an examination of the quite ironic language that casts hunting as synonymous with animal “conservation.” The “conservation” message of hunting enthusiasts directly champions the virtues of hunting as *the* means of protecting or “managing” animal species and the environment. FWS Director Williams directly equates hunting with the desire “to conserve America’s wildlife heritage.” In the speech before his sports shooting audience mentioned above, his passion is clear: “I would suggest to you that hunting is more important to wildlife management now than it has ever been before.” He credits hunters with the origination of U.S. conservation efforts, explaining that

“[i]n the early 1900s, when here in the United States, we began to see widespread wildlife

population declines, the hunting community saw what was happening and took action...sounded

the alarm...the abuses associated with unchecked wildlife consumption were reduced, and we saw

flocks of waterfowl and herds of deer rebound. And for this, the hunting community deserves the credit.”<sup>13</sup>

In other words, the “flocks and herds” rebounded because of concerned hunters. What Williams neglects to mention is that they were allowed to rebound not simply for their own value but so that they would be available as future prey for hunters. The Conservation Force agrees with Williams’ assessment. On their Website, they explain the role of hunting in conservation by proclaiming that “hunting has been the cornerstone and most important conservation development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues to be the leading contributor to conservation as man [sic] enters the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.”<sup>14</sup> Never mind that it was hunting that most heavily contributed to the need to establish conservation and species protection programs in the first place.

Williams, as a federal agent (who, by the way, is paid by U.S. taxpayers, the majority of whom, according to statistics, are non-hunters) promises to revive “the balance to our conservation mission.” He challenges his audience to also get involved in the work of conserving the noble, “deeply personal and spiritual experience” of hunting: “We are facing a decline in hunting participation in this country. Our traditional...support is challenged. Throughout the history of wildlife management, the hunting and shooting community has risen to the challenge and saved the day....I urge you to recommit yourself to our American hunting heritage...Let’s grow the shooting sports.”<sup>15</sup> It is difficult to assess whether Williams’ priority is on conserving wildlife or conserving the sport of recreational wildlife extermination.

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My *Merriam-Webster Pocket Thesaurus* offers the synonyms for “conserve” as “save, preserve, protect, shield, safeguard, defend”<sup>16</sup>; my *Oxford American College Dictionary* defines “conservationist” as one who “advocates or acts for the protection and preservation of the environment or wildlife.”<sup>17</sup> Both of these linguistic sources seem to contradict the ultimate goal of hunting—to take an animal’s life. So it’s difficult to legitimate the violence of hunting as a means of “protection” or “preservation.” It would seem more prudent to pursue conservation through humane, non-lethal means of wildlife population management. Yet because of hunting’s seemingly unquestioned virtue, there appears to be little incentive for developing non-lethal alternatives for “managing” animal populations that could ensure a high quality of life for all beings. In fact, it’s difficult to find literature that seriously presents alternatives to hunting in any length or that discusses any significant research into efficient and cost-effective non-lethal methods for animal population management. Instead, “control” or “conservation” by extermination is often presented as better for the animals themselves, so that healthy animals can have greater access to the limited resources “we” humans kindly allow them. As a result, the argument goes, “managed” herds can produce healthier offspring for our use. “We” are moral because we are “conserving” animal populations through “managed harvests.” In defense of such manipulation of words that makes hunting a benign activity, the Conservation Force cites well-known hunter and former U.S. President Teddy Roosevelt who, like Williams, credits the hunter virtually exclusively for the protection of wildlife species: “[W]ild animals only continue to exist at all when preserved by sportsmen...in reality the genuine sportsman is, by all odds, the most important factor in keeping the larger and more valuable wild creatures from total extermination.”<sup>18</sup> Neither Roosevelt nor the Conservation Force explain from whom these

creatures face extinction other than hunters or what Roosevelt might mean by “valuable” wild

creatures (what happens to “non-valuable” wildlife?), nor do they or Williams, among other pro-hunting conservation advocates, engage the contradiction inherent in protecting wildlife by means of recreational extermination of the very wildlife they insist they are protecting.

*Pheasants Forever* is one example of such contradiction that I ran across after a former student wrote a paper advocating pheasant conservation for the purpose of preserving the tradition of pheasant hunting. The non-profit organization presents its mission immediately on the web site home page as one of conservation, the goal being “the protection and enhancement of pheasants, quail and other upland wildlife through habitat improvement, public awareness, education and advocacy for sound land management.” Although the web site has undergone revision over the past few years since I first visited the site, their message is still the same. While pheasant hunting is not supported in direct words in their mission statement or at first glance, hunting is clearly significant to their identity: Their home page menu for the rest of the site includes a page for “Pheasant Hunting,” which displays several photos of hunters in action. Ironically the Pheasant Hunting link falls directly below the link to their “Habitat/Conservation” page. Here, the organization creates for itself an identity as political advocates for the pheasants’ well-being: “We at Pheasants Forever are striving to give a voice to the upland birds of America.” And yet on their history page, entitled, “The Birth of a Conservation Powerhouse,” hunting is clearly essential to their growth and development as a conservation organization, both in their historical narrative and in the accompanying photos. Meanwhile, throughout the site, sidebar advertising offers site visitors the opportunity to win a hunting rifle and repeatedly promotes pheasant hunting.<sup>19</sup> “Conservation,” then, for the founders and members of *Pheasants Forever* seems to mean pheasant habitat protection and population control through and for the

pleasure of killing the pheasants whose habitat and future they are protecting, ultimately not for the pheasants' well-being but for the deadly recreation of the humans who want to hunt them.

When hunters hunt in the name of conservation, they “cull” overpopulated herds by “taking” or “harvesting” individual members of the herds, ostensibly selecting and killing only weaker members of that herd to ensure that the strong continue and, at least in theory, produce equally strong offspring. As above, such deliberate terminology for describing hunting camouflages hunting's deadly actions by putting such actions into morally neutral terms. The reality is that far from “culling” the weakest members of the herds who would be the most vulnerable to harsh winters and food shortages, most hunters actually want to “bag a big one.” As Joanne Stepaniak, author of *The Vegan Sourcebook* puts it, most hunters seek out the biggest and best among the herds, leading some anti-hunters to identify “sport hunting as ‘evolution in reverse’; the survival of the least fit.” She points out that nature, left alone, does well in maintaining balance: “Without human interference, nature has its own way of reducing starvation. When food is scarce, the rate of conception drops and single births greatly outnumber twins; when food is more plentiful, both the conception rate and number of multiple births increase.” More troubling, according to Stepaniak, is that,

Under pressure from hunters, state wildlife agencies—which are, without exception, strongly

prohunting—systematically act to *increase* rather than decrease the size of deer herds so that

there will be plenty of live targets at which hunters can take aim. This is done through practices

such as clear-cutting forests to increase the food supply for deer—which in turn increases the size of the herd—and gender manipulation, allowing far more bucks than does to be killed during hunting season....Having deliberately increased the size of the deer herd, state wildlife agencies inform the public that hunting is necessary to control overpopulation, prevent starvation, avert dangerous collisions with cars, and avoid damage to crops and shrubs. Because the agencies' budgets are dependent upon the sale of hunting licenses, a large deer herd means increased sales.<sup>20</sup>

Further, new species of wild life are imported by state agencies to increase hunting opportunities for the public. For example, they “breed ring-necked pheasants, which are not native to North America, for release at the start of each hunting season.”<sup>21</sup> That is, federal and state public funds, including hunting fees, are used regularly to manufacture increased numbers of wildlife so that a small minority of the U.S. population can slaughter them for sport, in the name of “conservation,” a slaughter that is constructed through language as humane if not necessary to ensure the survival and well-being of the targeted wildlife. But as Anne Muller’s article on the Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting Web site points out, “Conservation law itself was created by hunters for hunters and greatly impacts the 93% non-hunting public...it subjugates the non-hunting public to the will of the 7% minority that hunts.”<sup>22</sup> Such an imbalance of power, and the

passive acquiescence of that overwhelming majority to the violent conservation strategies of the seemingly indomitable few, is troubling at best.

### **We Kill Because We Love Nature and Celebrate the Human Spirit**

Hunting is also cast as a celebration of nature; hunters enjoy the beauty of God's creation while extolling the glory of the human spirit. A hunting character is created which paradoxically portrays hunters as lovers of nature. Hunting is also portrayed as a means of building human character. The Conservation Force, for example, argues that

Hunting furthers character virtues like self reliance, responsibility, competence, discipline and

resolve. It employs and awakens our senses and our physical condition...It is our essence.

Hunting made us human...It is our "authenticity"...Hunting uniquely provides self actualization,

completeness and expressions which are complex, higher order needs deserving of protection. If

we were deprived of it, we would lose more than recreation. It is more than our heritage and

culture, it is our essence.<sup>23</sup>

Williams adds that "hunting is much more than bringing down a deer, a turkey, or some other game species"; he describes hunting as a spiritual endeavor "that teaches us about ourselves, about each other, and about nature."<sup>24</sup> But what, exactly, is it that hunting teaches us about who

we are? Both the Conservation Force and Williams further celebrate hunting as a right, as both a

personal choice and an American freedom all hunters should enjoy without guilt, question, or restraint.

Nowhere does the portrayal of hunting as a celebration of nature seem more paradoxical than in the rhetoric of Christian hunting organizations. Mark A. DePugh, founder of the Fellowship of Christian Hunters, explains what he enjoys about hunting:

God's creation and the witness of His creation are magnificent! It is beyond my comprehension! As hunters, we have the opportunity to see many species of nature including countless varieties of animals, plants, trees, flowers, insects and more. Can you think of anything more beautiful than.. Dogwood's [sic] in the Spring? Spectacular and vibrant foliage in the Fall? Snow-kissed pine branches in the Winter? Only to be followed again by daffodils, tulips, and the wonders continue! I can close my eyes and envision pillows of

snow covering the vast forest floor.. WOW, The [sic] only thing to make it more beautiful

would be to picture a 10-point Buck standing in that snow at a mere 30 yards away!

What

a dream, right? Well guess what, God wants and allows our dreams to come true. His magnificent creation is AWESOME, and He created it for us to respect and enjoy!<sup>25</sup>

A similar organization, The Christian Outdoor Fellowship of America, offers both Christians and non-Christians the opportunity to celebrate the beauty of nature while stalking and killing wildlife. When I first visited their Web site, their home page exhibited a photo of a hunter kneeling behind the antlers and head of the buck he had "harvested" (a euphemism many hunters substitute for the word "kill"). Next to the photo was the welcome:

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Greetings friend. I want to personally welcome you to COFA's hunting page. There is nothing like being in the woods, on the side of a mountain walking in the aspens, or on the prairies looking off into the distant sky. The sights and smells of autumn can be breathtaking to say the least. Here at COFA we want to encourage you to participate in the splendors of God's great outdoors.<sup>26</sup>

Besides celebrating the wonders of nature, all of the Christian hunting organizations whose Web sites I visited, present hunting, like Williams, as a spiritual practice, as a means of developing, renewing, or enhancing a relationship with God. It's an opportunity for bonding with fellow believers as well as for evangelism of unbelievers. Hunting additionally serves as a means of Biblical instruction, according to the Christian Deer Hunters Association. On a Web page entitled, "Ministry to Hunters," Founder Tom C. Rakow writes that one "primary objective of the Christian Deer Hunters Association is to reveal and encourage a Biblical World View approach to deer hunting," imbuing hunting with a godly virtue, which he then contrasts with the more pagan, idolatrous, and non-Christian worldview that condemns hunting and values animal life as sacred.<sup>27</sup> Scully found a similar theology in his visit to the SCI convention. He reports that a handout distributed during an SCI prayer breakfast "warns against 'The Pagan Roots of Environmentalism,' tracing everything from the United Nations to the Endangered Species Act to 'New Age' religions that include deep ecology, eco-feminism and the worship of Gaia—Mother Earth"<sup>28</sup> So those who hunt are characterized as closer to God's truth than those resisting such a blood sport and its camouflaged violence.

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Even ESPN, a cable television sports network, offers on its Web site a Christian defense of hunting. In his article “Bringing Hunting Back into The Church,” James Swan argues that hunting has always been closely connected with religious belief and practice, implying direct biblical support for hunting. Extolling the virtues of charitable Christian hunting organizations that distribute their “harvests” to food banks as “outreach ministries,” he laments intolerant churches that support animal rights and anti-hunting viewpoints and ignore the Christian call to “brotherly love of the Christian faith as well as Biblical teachings.” He seems to argue that hunters aren’t being fully welcomed or integrated into church congregational practice as they should be. He points to one particular example of a church that practices what Swan seeks—open support for hunting as a God-blessed activity. Reverend Stephen Dietzler, pastor of the church Swan extols, annually offers a “Service of the Hunt” at the opening of deer season. The service “gives hunters a chance to celebrate God’s creation, and shows parallels between hunting, Christian stewardship, and Christian living.” Further, according to Swan, Dietzler “encourages hunters to wear blaze orange or camouflage to church” during hunting season, and Swan believes that more pastors should follow Dietzler’s example. As Swan sees it, if churches would encourage hunters in their congregations to fulfill their godly celebration of nature by hunting, they would be helping to “restore hunters to the rightful place in society as being heroes.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, according to the Conservation Force Web site, it is the anti-hunters who are acting “anti-socially, offensively, and immorally” in the world.<sup>30</sup> Thus, in the “hunters as lovers of nature” self-identity, hunters are glorious and heroic lovers of God and His creation and servants of humanity, who humbly celebrate nature and build their character by killing wild animals, and who, as they portray themselves in their public texts, are above moral question or reproach.

British theologian and animal advocate Andrew Linzey, however, is unconvinced by this character-building, godly construction of “the conscientious Christian hunter” celebrating the wonders of nature. He argues instead that hunting is “the anti-gospel,” making Jesus a predator and human hunters little more than parasites on creation (114): “In short, the gospel of ‘hunting with Jesus’ is a gospel of Predation. Life eating life is not some unfortunate aspect of the natural world to be tolerated...between creation and consummation. Rather, [in the hunting gospel] God actually wills and blesses a self-murdering system of survival. God’s will *is* death.” Linzey insists that, in reality, celebrating God’s creation through the slaughter of animals has nothing to do with God or the gospel of Jesus:

Overall, and without the faintest fear of contradiction, we can with confidence proclaim that the Predator view of Jesus is untenable...the sacrifice of animals is always murder.”.... The biblical orientation is not to baptize the ‘laws of the universe’ as the purposes of God but rather to look to their transformation and fulfillment. If we are to appeal to the life and teaching of Jesus as the revelation of God, we cannot avoid the fact that so much of his life challenges, if not contradicts, the order of the world as we know it. From this standpoint, to be involved in wanton killing can only be judged deplorable....Since in Christ there is a new creation, there can be no justification for humanity to increase, exacerbate and intensify that predatory system itself...we can

live differently and we should.<sup>31</sup>

Stepaniak offers similar challenges to the notion that hunting is a means of celebrating nature and developing character. “Hunters...portray themselves as the last exemplars of the glorious virtues of a bygone era,” she observes. She adds that for hunters, “[h]unting...instills in its devotees such noble qualities as self-reliance, ruggedness, discipline, and courage. It is characterized as a salutary antidote to the debilitating vices of modern civilization.” But Stepaniak quickly questions such character building:

Contrast the hunters’ fiction with the facts. Hunters skulk about the forest in camouflage, wait in

ambush for their victims, and kill at long range with overpowering, technological weapons, often

going to extraordinary lengths to lure their unsuspecting prey to a violent death....They inflict pain

and death on creatures who cannot hurt them. Even animals who could pose a threat...would

normally run rather than fight a human being....Hunters kill innocent, helpless beings who bear

them no ill will and whose best defense is blind luck...entrap and frequently shoot terrified animals

in the back as they flee for their lives...tempt animals with a false promise of food or a mate, and

then kill the trusting creatures who are duped by their bait. These are not the virtues of any era,

past or present. They are the vices of bullying and cowardice.<sup>32</sup>

And then they pass on such character qualities to their children with a sense of pride and tradition, which many of the students who come through my classes attest to by their love and defense of hunting as only humane and virtuous, if not necessary for human survival. But Stepaniak argues that in fact what hunters are teaching their children is that “concern for the suffering and death of animals is a form of weakness, and...killing is fun.” Likewise Stepaniak is no more convinced than Linzey that hunting is a glorious way to enjoy nature, pointing out that in fact, what hunters insist they enjoy about hunting—being outdoors, sitting around campfires with family or friends, getting refreshed by brisk hikes in the crisp fall air—is actually “derived from the *pursuit* not from the kill.” If, on the other hand, she adds, it is in fact the kill that hunters enjoy, then “it is bloodlust pure and simple.”<sup>33</sup>

### **We Kill to Survive**

A third common pro-hunting argument is that of a “contest” of survival—“us” against “them,” taking animals on in a life-or-death battle on “their turf.” In a display of absolute human power, an intellectually superior human being challenges the power of an inferior but possibly threatening “other”—in this case an animal or game bird. Like modern-day gladiators, hunters enter the other’s territory and challenge their animal prey to battle, as if the animal has any voice in such a “head-to-head” confrontation. But there is no “contest.” The animal is not there in the wilderness to contest anyone; it’s not there looking for a fight with a human opponent whose life it’s seeking to terminate just for “sport.” The contest is entirely initiated and carried out by the human hunter. Further, to reiterate Stepaniak above, the animals have no long-range, high-powered weapons with which to shoot back, or defenses that can match the firepower of human weapons technologies. Instead, they’re often taken by deception and surprise, from a distance,

from a camouflaged location, shot in the back so-to-speak, “harvested” out of the air, or while they are grazing nearby. And the proud hunter returns from the wilderness with his or her prey, full of photos and stories that celebrate the victory over the wild beast.

A perfect example comes from the Web site *BigGameHunts.net*, where hunter Jim Oltersdorf details for the pro-hunting audience his “contest” against Alaskan Brown Bears, which admittedly are wild animals that could easily kill a human. He begins his story by describing the survival context:

The stakes become high when the hunter becomes the hunted. Becoming the ultimate jackpot

isn’t why you are there. In this game of bullet against claws, teeth, and immeasurable strength, the

victor becomes the king of the Alaskan tundra. There are no places to hide; there are no trees to

climb in out of harms way. It becomes a chance hand of how the cards are dealt. You pray they

fall in your direction. It is hunting at its finest and it addresses every bit of talent, stamina, nerve,

marksmanship, stealth and courage you may or may not have. A thousand pound carnivore that

can out-sprint a gold medal Olympian runner and deliver death in a single blow is nothing short of

what we all fear, the primal response of being attacked and killed by a beast.<sup>34</sup>

In his story, however, Oltersdorf wasn't exactly the "hunter becoming the hunted," in which the bear pursued him. Rather, Oltersdorf and his companions flew far into the Alaskan wilderness, stalked and then shot two bears who were simply living their lives, of no threat to human habitat or humans. He too celebrates the beauty of the wilderness, including the beauty of one of the bears who had "the most beautiful fur [he'd] ever seen, deep chocolate with silver tips."<sup>35</sup> But his focus remains primarily on the life-threatening challenge he and his fellow hunters faced. Describing the actual hunt, he recalls the moment when one of the two bears sensed the human intruders' presence. But instead of charging the humans, in a "game of bullet against claws, teeth, and immeasurable strength," Oltersdorf notes that the bear "spun around and took off," alerting the other bear who apparently stayed in place but who still posed no direct threat to the men. He explains that he held his fire at that moment; apparently he wasn't in a position to mortally wound the remaining bear, since "[a] wounded brownie [brown bear] can become the devil himself and that was the last thing I wanted." But then the bear apparently began to rise onto its hind legs, and the men opened fire. Oltersdorf writes that the bear was fired upon multiple times, and although he points out that when first fired on, the bear "never flinched," certainly it felt the pain of being hit repeatedly by the bullets.

Oltersdorf describes the bear's final moments of life: "Labored breathing is all that could be heard for that moment; the great bear lay dead." He explains why the hunters didn't go ensure the bear was dead, to put it out of its misery if it was not: "It's a very good idea not to go charging in after a kill, especially with bears. I like to give a minimum of half an hour after the bear goes down before going up to it. Simply said, it's too dangerous."<sup>36</sup> Consequently, if the bear was mortally wounded but still alive, it had to lie there and slowly bleed to death in pain, because of the danger it posed to the hunter.

Oltersdorf then narrates his efforts to “bag” the second bear, who’d fled the scene. Clearly, from his story, there was “no place to hide...out of harm’s way” for that bear because Oltersdorf pursued it, determined to end its life for his own pleasure. He reports that he found it minding its own business looking for salmon on a river bank, no threat to him or his companions. But he explains that he wanted the second bear because he “might not get another chance to bag one” before this particular “contest” was over.<sup>37</sup> When the bear at the river raised up, still unaware of his human predator, Oltersdorf fired. The injured bear ran away and Oltersdorf chased it, continued firing, and ultimately brought this bear down as well. His final sentences conclude his “contest” with the bears in concise but victorious terms: “The Smith & Wesson had done its job well. I had bet my life on it.”<sup>38</sup> Although, from his narration, both bears continually sought to get away from the hunters, rather than pursuing the humans as his opening paragraph implies, Oltersdorf maintains the theme of “us” against “them” throughout the violent tale, violence enacted solely by the humans who went out of their way to be in the circumstances Oltersdorf describes. His story is not unique; several pages of similar “us against them” hunting stories are provided at the *BigGameHunts.net* Web site.

Wayne van Zwoll, in the article “Why Hunting Can’t Be What It Was” on the North American Hunting Club Web site, explains Oltersdorf’s love of the hunt and the kill as a “manifestation of the vestigial beast in humans—the predatory instinct of a killer...unsettling evidence of our primitive bond to nature.”<sup>39</sup> As one of the more straightforward defenders of hunters that I have encountered online, Van Zwoll admits in direct terms that the goal of hunting is always to kill: “Hunters want to get game. That’s why they hunt. If they tell you different, don’t believe them. The object of hunting has always been to get game, not to see pretty country, hike new trails, or relax around a campfire...a hunter who loads his rifle is putting his

reputation as a predator on the line.”<sup>40</sup> He cites writer Ernest Hemingway, who “relished ‘the competitiveness, the occasional not-quite necessary tests of courage and endurance’”<sup>41</sup> that Oltersdorf narrates. None of them ever questions (at least not in print) their contradictory construction of a hunting identity that relies on an understanding of evolved humans (or, in the case of the Christian hunters, “redeemed” humans ostensibly under the control of God’s Spirit) as unevolved, primitive and predatory, as seemingly addicted to the need to kill that lies hidden, deep within our genetic makeup as humans and thus out of our control. It seems, instead, to simply be a given, a natural part of human essence. And the image of the fierce hunter facing danger is always cast in the light of survival and strength.

Anti-hunting critic Matthew Scully adds to this ethical construction one hunter’s own words, from the magazine *Shooting Field*. This individual celebrates the unpredictability inherent in hunting wild animals: ““Even if the day’s quarry has been nurtured throughout the year by a gamekeeper, the more the guns remember that these are essentially wild creatures that can surprise and delight in their wild unpredictability, then the better they will enjoy the day.””<sup>42</sup> In other words, even “canned hunting” on game preserves is cast in the framework of potential danger. But Scully, unwilling to accept this portrayal, sets his readers straight about what really takes place during such canned hunts for “wild” game birds, explaining that as the hunters get in place, the birds are released for the first time in their lives from cages. The gamekeeper then “grabs hold of the fowl...and hurls them heavenward” so that the hunters “experience the exhilaration of hearing all the familiar sounds of the beaters urging the birds on their way, and relish the challenges ahead.”<sup>43</sup> The “contest” in this case is entirely but carefully staged, carefully, so participants can still experience the thrill of the hunt. The tame nature of this hunt, in contrast to the wilderness hunt Oltersdorf narrates, is nevertheless presented to readers as a

survival contest, albeit one in which the human hunter is destined to prevail (since victory is what the game preserve hunter has paid for). Like Scully, Stepaniak challenges this heroic hunter narrative: “In fact, very few hunting injuries are inflicted by animals; nearly all are caused by carelessness. Most hunters who are killed during the hunt either shoot themselves accidentally or are shot by other hunters. If hunting is considered a dangerous sport, it is not the animals who make it so.”<sup>44</sup> Indeed; during the 2005 hunting season, when I undertook much of my cable news channel-surfing on hunting, I ran across more than one news bite about residents living near hunting areas dyeing their cattle and companion animals red or pink in order to offer them some protection by distinguishing them from the targeted wild game that trigger-happy, shoot-first-and-ask-questions-later hunters were seeking.

### **The Violence of Hunting Is Not Virtuous Even if the Human Hunters Are**

There is one more reason to question language used to camouflage the bloody reality of hunting, and that is for what it can reveal to us about ourselves, whether we are hunters or silent non-hunting bystanders: hunting language is based in an ethic in which taking non-human life is glorified, and the slaughter of the animal is given little reflective, critical thought; animal life is inferior to human life, of value primarily for its benefit to humans and therefore expendable. It is rhetoric that does not hold up under scrutiny. Modern weapons technologies have evolved exponentially to make the hunting “contest” highly one-sided against the animals. Technological advances potentially offer alternative, humane, and non-lethal methods of animal population conservation, but because of little outcry against hunting and even less monetary support for further research, such non-lethal methods are rarely pursued or improved so that they become cost-effective and preferred to hunting. Further, framing hunting as an act of conservation or of celebrating the glory of creation—in which living creatures are stalked and then destroyed—is

contradictory at best, if not absurd. And while hunting animals for food, clothing, or home furnishings once might have been necessary for survival, such circumstances, for the most part, are no longer the case. Hunting for food and household goods is, at least in Western cultures, primarily a lifestyle choice, as is meat-eating, and thus subject to challenge and change, particularly when that lifestyle choice is extolled as “good” and “responsible,” if not as an absolute right even though it requires the bloody slaughter of a living being.

But we cannot conflate a character for hunters with the virtuously violent act of hunting. In fact I argue the opposite, that hunters are in fact most often likely to be “good,” peace-loving people, with good intentions. To portray them as somehow and in varying degrees “evil,” or as blood thirsty in character simply dismisses “them” as different from “us” truly good folk who find hunting antithetical to a peace-seeking, life-affirming ethic. In other situations, “them” is “us”; that is, we’re all susceptible to justifying or rationalizing our unseemly peccadilloes or our blatantly bad behavior with well-crafted syntax and carefully chosen words. Instead, as Religious Studies and Women’s Studies Professor Sharon D. Welch points out, the violence and oppression endorsed in our culture as not only necessary but responsible and noble often arise from genuinely good intentions of well-meaning people. In her book, *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, Welch focuses primarily on the violence inherent in a militaristic national defense policy relied upon as the best way to keep America secure from threatening others.<sup>45</sup> We might offer as one example of the rationale she critiques the 2005 U.S. Congressional debates about torture as an ethical means of “interrogation” for Guantanamo “detainees” incarcerated during the U.S. War on Terrorism. Critiquing nuclear proliferation in particular, Welch does *not* question the “goodness” of national decision-makers or of citizens who support a strong nuclear defense program, explaining that

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the arms race is as much a product of goodness as it is of evil, as much a consequence of responsibility as it is of irresponsibility....as much a fruit of what Western civilization regards as its

best as it is of its worst....When confronted with social evil, many people assert their good

intentions, resist feeling guilty, and claim that they are actually decent people.<sup>46</sup>

In fact they are in all likelihood “decent people” with “good intentions” as is also likely true of our current leaders who endorse a strong militaristic ethic as the best means of keeping “us” safe from terrorists. One might claim that when the Governor of Louisiana and the Mayor of New Orleans decided in August 2005 to open the Superdome as a place of refuge from Hurricane Katrina for the poorest of the poor, their intentions were to protect the residents who had no means of evacuation in what they determined was the safest location. But good intentions did not reduce the travesty we all witnessed on cable news for days after Katrina was long gone. Welch argues, in fact, that “‘good’ intentions are beside the point, for *well-intentioned people are responsible for the nuclear arms race.*” The problem, as she sees it, lies not in the evil of individuals, but in our corporate, cultural, and even individual definition of “goodness”: “The problem is deeper and more complex than a simple manifestation of either ignorance or malevolence. Our culture’s definition of goodness will lead us again and again to the horrors of genocide, to the threat of nuclear war.”<sup>47</sup> So whether we’re talking about national responses to terrorism, nuclear arms, disaster response, or animal exploitation, there are deep, life-threatening flaws in how we, individually and together, define what is “good,” and until we are willing to seriously re-examine our definitions, and the language with which we publicly

argue our ethical ideals, we will continue to participate in and experience a world that is dangerous and deadly.

Welch poses as a solution a “reversion of values” in which we embrace our genuine “desire to be good as the motive for a thorough examination of the deadly consequences of particular values and reformulating what we mean by ‘responsible action’ in light of the consequences of our culture’s definitions of virtue.”<sup>48</sup> That is, we need to stop and thoughtfully ask ourselves why we are doing what we are doing, examining whether or not we are truly becoming the people we profess and seek to be. Perhaps Arizona Senator, and former Vietnam POW, John McCain serves as an example of such an examination when in late 2005, he persistently and successfully challenged Congress and the Administration to articulate and enforce a policy against any kind of torture in our pursuit of information necessary for national security.<sup>49</sup> Besides the fact that such torture rarely succeeds in its goals, it says more about us than it does about the prisoners we are “interrogating.”

Welch presents her “ethic of risk” as grounded in feminist ideology because it is “in communities of women” where she has found “clear analyses of the nature of oppression” and “modes of resisting” violence and oppression “with dignity and joy.” She argues that we cannot understand national ethics and policies that are grounded in violent control by structures of power “without examining the role that sexism plays in constituting the structures within which strategic policies are developed.” In particular, Welch has found in “the wisdom of women from around the world” a different kind of power, power that is healing and transformative, yet power that is risky because it is not the power of guaranteed success, which is the goal of what Welch has identified as an ethic of control.<sup>50</sup> I agree with Welch’s challenge, and argue that the same

kind of “reversion of values” and “thorough examination of the deadly consequences of

particular values” is called for with regard to the practice of slaughtering animals for sport.

Welch explains that our current definitions of “goodness,” and “responsible action” are based in “an intrinsically immoral balance of power,” and as I’ve already demonstrated, hunting is all about a balance of power that is entirely weighted on the side of the humans with their camouflage and overwhelming, long-range weapons.

The camouflage of hunting rhetoric that ennobles the violent stalking and slaughter of animals must be challenged so that a serious and life-affirming transformation of ethics and practice can evolve. A good first step is questioning the words by which any violence against a living being is justified or glorified, so that we can see and then resist the unjustifiable and unethical violence we uncover, such as the very real violence of hunting. But then such an unveiling must be accompanied by a willingness to respond and change how we act in and upon the world. With regard to a life-affirming and compassionate interaction with animals, such a willingness could include a transformation of how we eat, what laws we enact, what we purchase, what traditions we pass on to our children, how we share our resources and confront animal over-population, how we conduct needed medical research, and how we entertain ourselves including how we spend recreational time.<sup>51</sup> Undertaking such transformation of ways of life we’ve accepted if not participated in unquestioningly for decades would not be easy, and, as Welch notes, would require us to examine exactly what we mean by “good,” which itself would be thought-provoking and difficult, and not something “we” could accomplish quickly. But if Albert Schweitzer is right, that until we treat animals with compassion, we ourselves will never know peace, then such questioning and transformation will be well worth the risk.

**Watching Our Words, and the Actions they Describe, Imply, Justify**

To paraphrase Schweitzer, we humans and animals are all connected on this planet, like a mobile: if we jostle just one strand, the entire system feels it and reacts. Shining a light on the questionable virtues endorsed by commonplace hunting language, which camouflages reality and distracts us from the violence inflicted upon animals, is not necessarily an isolated act of reflection that challenges only the actions and ethics of a small minority of individuals who hunt. Van Zwoll's honest assessment of every hunter's mission, to pursue and kill an animal, offers us all a challenge to assess the language undergirding violent national policies and individual ethical standpoints. I'm not in a position to put words in her mouth, but Welch might point out that it's likely no accident that hunting camouflage bears direct resemblance to the camouflage military personnel wear into combat; after all, the ends are strikingly similar. The camouflage with which hunters cover their bodies itself presents a powerful visual message. Likewise the camouflaged language intended to disguise the brutal realities taking place during hunting season bears resemblance as well, again with similar ends—to present both hunting and mortal combat as necessary at worst, glorious and heroic at best.

Clearly, such camouflaged violence doesn't begin and end with hunting language. The debates in our legislative and executive branches about the necessity of torture to a successful military campaign against an enemy designated as "terrorist"—as if our own brutalities are somehow more honorable than those of our enemies—further illustrate how deliberate language choices are made with the intention of minimizing the violence of our actions if not rendering it invisible. One of my favorite hunting terms is "harvesting," used when an animal is successfully killed in a hunt, as if what takes place while hunting is simply a neutral agricultural process; the term renders the violence entirely invisible and twists hunting into a benign event. But our lexicon is filled with such rhetorical camouflage. Thus it is likewise fallacious that mortally

wounded victims of combat are identified as “casualties,” when there is nothing casual about their deaths in violent battle. We hide the violent realities of abortion behind clinical terminology, and whether a woman is pro-choice or pro-life doesn’t change the violent realities of the abortion procedure, especially when it is undertaken late in a pregnancy. We hide the frightening realities of the daily slaughter of unwanted pets in shelters and pounds with the most inappropriate term—“euthanasia” (which from its greek roots means “good death,” when there is nothing good about it). We make the daily barbaric slaughter of tens of thousands of animals for food into the clean and efficient technological, assembly-line production of “meat processing.” Disciplinary execution of individuals found guilty of violent crimes is dispatched as “capital punishment,” again rendering often violent deaths invisible, as well as arguably unjust in far too many cases. My point is that when we continue to hide our violence behind deliberate, carefully manipulated language, particularly if we accept as reality what we are told with little if any critical interrogation, especially without any self-reflection individually or as a society, we cannot confront the violence we say that we seek to eliminate so that all living beings can live out their lives in safety and peace.

I have offered concrete examples, from the arena of hunting, of how violence can be deliberately camouflaged by the words we put forth, to illuminate the rhetorical and ethical contradictions common to such common practice. My goal has been to argue that such illumination is necessary in order to confront violent realities frequently taken as given in prevailing notions of “goodness.” Language can be (re-)invented to mask our violent actions, to empower us with a deadly form of power and a sense of goodness about our necessary yet noble actions. But our public rhetoric can also be

used to resist “virtuous violence” and deliver alternative, transformative ethics and actions to

those who are seeking new, healing and life-affirming ways of being for themselves and for the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Albert, source unknown.

<sup>2</sup> Welch, Sharon D. A Feminist Ethic of Risk. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990. See page 9.

<sup>3</sup> Scully, Matthew. Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002. Scully served on the speechwriting staff of President George W. Bush throughout his first term as President and into his second term.

<sup>4</sup> Scully makes repeated reference to this trait throughout his book, particularly by animal behaviorists, of justifying our brutality against animals because animals are not like humans especially because they are unable to speak up in their own defense, a justification he challenges. Because the animals can't articulate their terror or pain, the argument goes, then we can't prove scientifically that they feel pain or fear, so then we must assume that they do not, so it then there is no harm, no foul in anything we do to them in the name of science (or meat processing, or hunting, etc.). See chapter 5 in particular.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament of the Bible, and the first book of the Torah, begins with the creation narrative that describes how God created the universe through an ordered process. In that narrative, God gives humanity "dominion" over creation, and this verse is referenced regularly in defense of animal exploitation, to support a belief that God created animals for human use. Some Jewish and Christian animal advocates and religious scholars challenge how the term "dominion" is defined and used by those who use scripture to justify their treatment of animals.

<sup>6</sup> Heidi Prescott. "Hunting the Hunters: Women Hunt Saboteurs." Feminists for Animal Rights: An Eco-Feminist Alliance. Accessed August 27, 2005 from [http://www.farinc.org/newsletter/v8\\_n3-4\\_94/hunt\\_sabs.html](http://www.farinc.org/newsletter/v8_n3-4_94/hunt_sabs.html).

Also, Williams, Steve. "Director Steve Williams at the National Shooting Sports Summit: Giving Weight to Hunters & Shooters—the Original Conservationists." Speeches. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. June 7, 2002. Accessed August 27, 2005 from <http://news.fws.gov/speeches/director2002June7.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Steve. Op cit.

<sup>8</sup> Scully, Matthew. Op cit., 53

<sup>9</sup> Prescott, Heidi. Op cit.

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<sup>10</sup> BBCNews.com. "Kerry Goes Hunting for Ohio Votes." BBCNews. October 22, 2004. Accessed July 13, 2006 from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/3762770.stm>.

<sup>11</sup> Wilgoren, Jodi. "The 2004 Campaign: The Democratic Nominee; Kerry on Hunting Photo-Op to Help Image." The New York Times, October 22, 2004. Accessed July 13, 2006 from <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?sec=health&res=9907E3DA1E3AF931A15753C1A9629C8B63&fta=y>.

<sup>12</sup> The NRA political arm, the ILA, commenting on Kerry's October 2004 hunting excursion, wasn't impressed with Kerry's efforts to frame himself as a pro-gun rights, pro-hunting candidate. See Robinson, Kayne. "Kerry Rated "F"...Fake, Fraud and Second Amendment Phony." NRA-ILA 22 October 2004. Accessed July 16, 2006 from <http://www.nra.org/Issues/Articles/Read.aspx?ID=151>.

<sup>13</sup> op cit., Williams.

<sup>14</sup> The Conservation Force. "The Call of the Hunt: Why We Hunt." and "The Role of Hunting." Accessed August 27, 2005 <http://www.conservationforce.org>.

<sup>15</sup> op cit., Williams.

<sup>16</sup> Merriam Webster's Pocket Thesaurus. Pocket Reference Library. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2002.

<sup>17</sup> The Oxford-American College Dictionary. Oxford University Press. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Op cit., The Conservation Force.

<sup>19</sup> Pheasants Forever. Accessed July 16, 2006 from <http://www.pheasantsforever.org/>.

<sup>20</sup> Stepaniak, Joanne. The Vegan Sourcebook. Los Angeles: Lowell House, 2000. See pages 77-78

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 78

<sup>22</sup> Muller, Anne. "The Greatest Challenge Facing the American Hunting Movement Today is...To Democratize Wildlife Management." Committee to Abolish Sport Hunting, Spring 1994. Accessed August 27, 2005 from <http://www.all-creatures.org/cash/cc94sp-challenges.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Op cit., The Conservation Force.

<sup>24</sup> Op cit., Williams.

<sup>25</sup> DePugh, Mark. "Why I Hunt." Fellowship of Christian Hunters. Accessed June 25, 2004 from <http://fellowshipofchristianhunters.org/A%20Mommment/hunt!.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Christian Outdoor Fellowship of America. "Hunters." Accessed June 25, 2004 from <http://www.cofausa.org/Hunters.shtml>.

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<sup>27</sup> Rakow, Tom C. "Ministry to Hunters." The Christian Deer Hunters Association. Accessed June 25, 2004

<http://www.christiandeerhunters.org/>.

<sup>28</sup> Scully, Matthew. Op cit. See pages 55-56.

<sup>29</sup> Swan, James. "Bringing Hunting Back into the Church." ESPN.com:Conservation. December 4, 2003. Accessed August 27, 2005 from <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id+1678441&type=story>.

<sup>30</sup> Op cit., The Conservation Force.

<sup>31</sup> Linzey, Andrew. Animal Theology. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994 . See pages 114, 119, 121, 123.

<sup>32</sup> Op cit., Stepaniak, 76-77.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, 80

<sup>34</sup> Oltersdorf, Jim. "Handgun Hunting the Alaskan Brown Bear." BigGameHunts.net February 5, 2004. Accessed July 4, 2004 from [http://www.biggamehunt.net/sections/Alaska/Handgun\\_Hunting\\_the\\_Alaskan\\_Brown\\_bear\\_02050401.html](http://www.biggamehunt.net/sections/Alaska/Handgun_Hunting_the_Alaskan_Brown_bear_02050401.html).

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Van Zwoll, Wayne. "Why Hunting Can't Be What It Was." Evolution of Hunting. North American Hunting Club. Accessed August 27, 2005 from <http://www.huntingclub.com/document.asp?diD=5236>.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Op cit., Scully, 74

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Op cit., Stepaniak, 76

<sup>45</sup> Op cit., Welch. See page 8, for example, where she initially explains her opposition to the "actions, values, and philosophies that have brought us to [the brink of nuclear annihilation]." Chapter 2, "An Ethic of Control," also details in depth the militaristic mindset that Welch challenges.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 2

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, 2

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, 3

<sup>49</sup> McCain, John. "Torture's terrible toll." *Newsweek* November 21, 2005. Accessed 16 July from [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10019179/site/newsweek/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10019179/site/newsweek/). In this editorial, McCain argues that torture and abuse of prisoners of war "inevitably become public, and when they do they threaten our moral standing" by raising questions about the moral superiority of democracies over oppressive regimes and by weakening the credibility of nations such as the U.S. that insist upon "international prohibitions against torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners."

<sup>50</sup> *Op cit.* Welch, 9

<sup>51</sup> modeled on a list Welch offers, in her 2000 revision of *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*, as examples of how we might work to transform society from within a life-affirming ethical foundation rather than a militaristic one. See page 35, where she argues that accountability for social transformation must ultimately move beyond ideas and rhetoric into action. I must add that Welch does not offer this list as a "one-size-fits-all 'how to' manual" of prescribed actions that everyone who is on the side of "right" should undertake. Rather she suggests life-affirming actions as possibilities that may promote compassionate transformation and liberation from oppression though they will never guarantee success; to imply otherwise would be to misrepresent what she is proposing.